

HISTORY, PURPOSE, METHODS, DIFFICULTIES

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THE HOME DEPARTMENT
OF THE SUNDAY-SCHOOL

M.C. HAZARD PH., D.

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WM. A. DUNCAN, Ph.D.

HOME CLASSES

OR THE

HOME DEPARTMENT

OF THE

SUNDAY-SCHOOL

ITS HISTORY, PURPOSE AND PLAN, ORGANIZATION, METHODS,
REQUISITES AND DIFFICULTIES.

ms. hall
BY
M. C. HAZARD, PH.D.



Congregational Sunday-School and Publishing Society

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RESOLUTIONS

Third World's and 7th International SUNDAY SCHOOL CONVENTION

held at St. Louis the August 28th to Sept 5th 1891

HOME DEPARTMENT.

These Resolutions were adopted by the

HOME CLASS DEPARTMENT

*of the Sunday School
represented by*

DR. W. H. DUNCAN



to recommend the same to the Sunday School workers throughout the world.

Believe the adoption of this plan will increase the membership of the Sunday School and extend the benefits of the School to many who cannot regularly attend its sessions. *Unanimously adopted.*

Resolved,

That it is the sense of this Convention that the

HOME CLASS DEPARTMENT

SUNDAY SCHOOL,

is a most practical and efficient method of
Sunday School Work.

*and we do most heartily recommend its adoption by all schools
and hope that all National Convention associations make
definite and systematic efforts to secure
its general adoption.*

*Adopted by the
Home Class
Department
of the Convention*

J. J. Delaney, President 1st World's S. S. Con.
B. Jacobs, 2^d "
Wm. Miller, 7th Int'l. "

HOME CLASSES

OR

THE HOME DEPARTMENT

I.

HISTORY OF THE HOME DEPARTMENT.

THE Home Class idea, out of which the Home Department has grown, had its birth in the same year with that of the Christian Endeavor movement. The latter had its inception in February of 1881, and the Home Class in June of that year. The Christian Endeavor Society was formed for the purpose of training young people into Christian life and service; the Home Class was originated to promote the study of the Bible outside of the Sunday-school by individuals and in the home. Both movements have proved to be powerful evangelizing agencies.

The thought embodied in the Christian Endeavor Society was the quicker to catch public attention and to secure approval. It did so because the minds of many had been dwelling upon the necessity of doing something to stimulate Christian life in the young, to bring them into closer connection with the church, and to develop them into earnest and successful workers for the Master. Therefore, when Father Endeavor Clark,

as his constituency delight to call him, seized upon the Endeavor idea and made use of it with such good results, others were ready to take it up and adopt it. In seven years after the organization of the first Young People's Society of Christian Endeavor, the multiplication of societies was such, and their demands for information, guidance, and help were so great, that Dr. Clark felt compelled to give up his pastoral work that he might devote his whole time to fostering and propagating the Christian Endeavor idea. The Home Class suggestion was of slower growth, because people had not been thinking along that line. The soil had not been prepared for it. It had to win its way against a natural incredulity as to its practicability. It was believed that the Sunday-school was already accomplishing all that it could in the direction of Bible study. It was feared by some that, if the Home Class should succeed at all, it would be at the expense of attendance upon the Sunday-school itself. Therefore it had to demonstrate not only its feasibility but also its harmlessness. It began to grow with considerable rapidity when it not only succeeded in doing this, but actually proved itself to be a positive reinforcement to the main school. The expansion of the movement, though somewhat tardy in coming, has of late years become almost as phenomenal as that of the Christian Endeavor Society. It has been recommended by many county and state Sunday-school associations; it has been approved in the summer Sunday-school assemblies; it has received the unqualified endorsement of the last World's Sunday-school Convention; it has been adopted by nearly every evangelical denomination; it is to be found in successful operation

not only in the United States, but also in England, Canada, Bohemia, and India.

The genesis of any great movement is always interesting and of value. This is peculiarly so. As in the case of the Christian Endeavor Society there is no doubt as to its originator. What Dr. Clark is to that organization Dr. W. A. Duncan is to this.

I. **The origin.** — While attending a district Sunday-school convention in New York State, in the spring of 1881, a woman who had a veranda class expressed to Dr. Duncan her regret that her pastor showed no sympathy with her work. Living among those who did not attend Sunday-school on account of the distance to the church, she had gathered a class of boys and girls upon a porch for the study of the Sunday-school lesson, and walked about three miles every Sunday to teach it. It was her idea that she was doing the work of the Sunday-school fully as much as any teacher attending its sessions, and that her efforts should receive the same recognition and help accorded to other teachers. But these were withheld because she was not in the same building at the same time with the other teachers, instructing her class under the personal supervision of the superintendent. At that date there had been no conception of extending the work of the Sunday-school outside of the church building. In the thought of every one the Sabbath-school and the place where it was held were as inseparable as the warp and woof of a woven fabric. No class could be a part of the school which was not with the school during its sessions.

Instantly Dr. Duncan saw large possibilities in extending the boundaries of the Sunday-school to the farthest

reach of the parish. Probably his connection with the Chautauqua Literary and Scientific Circle movement had prepared him for such an extension, for in that he had seen what could be done in promoting reading and study by the formation of small local circles, and even among individuals, connected with and acting under the direction of the Chautauqua Assembly. Remembering his mother's class in the home, where he had received his formative Christian training, he was moved to sympathy with this woman in her isolation in her laudable work and experienced not a little indignation on account of its lack of recognition.

This special case suggested the Home Class, as distinct from the Sunday-school class, but which, like the latter, should be regarded as an integral part of the Sunday-school.

II. First steps in introduction.—In carrying out the idea which thus had occurred to him, Dr. Duncan made use in New York State of:—

1. The Woman's Sunday-school Mission Aid Association. Believing that what this one woman with her veranda class was doing, hundreds of other women might do also, Dr. Duncan conceived of a woman's organization which, in connection with the New York State Sunday-school Association, should stimulate similar work all over the state. His thought was that in every county women should be appointed whose duty it should be systematically to canvass the neglected districts, bringing into Sunday-school all who could be gathered in, establishing new Sunday-schools where they were needed, and forming home or neighborhood classes where neither could be done. Women were thought of for this work

rather than men because of their comparative leisure, their greater tact and sympathy, and their readier access to all sorts of homes.

Talking over the scheme with Rev. A. F. Beard, D.D., then pastor of a Congregational church in Syracuse, and now a secretary of the American Missionary Association, the latter was so impressed with the importance and feasibility of the suggestion, that he advocated it in a paper read at the annual convention of the New York State Sunday-school Association, held June 7-9, at Cortland. During his remarks Dr. Beard said: "She who lives in the neighborhood of a neglected district, and who will form a Sunday-school in the schoolhouse, or in the parlor, or kitchen of some friendly house, may not measure what will eventuate." Dr. Duncan, speaking in the same convention in support of the plan of forming such an organization, remarked: "Where there is a parlor, a kitchen, an empty room in the barn; where there is a tree which God has made to throw shade upon the earth; where there is a Christian mother who loves her sons and daughters; where there is a Christian sister who feels like doing something for the Master, — there these boys and girls can be gathered in and taught about Jesus."

As a result of this advocacy, there was formed the Woman's Sunday-school Mission Aid Association, "that through correspondence and local visitation the Christian women of the state may be enlisted in mission Sunday-school work." Mrs. Allen Butler, of Syracuse, was chosen as General Secretary.

It will be observed that the expression of the purpose of the Association does not conform in terms to the

special work which Dr. Duncan had in mind for it. But the formation of Home Classes was only one of the things which it was organized to do, and whether it should be one of the chief things or not could be determined only by experiment. The idea of the Home Class was as yet too new and untried to be presented as the one around which such an organization should crystallize. To have urged that as the principal motive for the institution of such a body would have been to defeat it. In time this Woman's Association proved to be just the effective agency for propagating the Home Class idea which Dr. Duncan hoped that it would be.

It should be further noted that so far the conception was only of neighborhood classes. Whether the class was to be held in the schoolhouse, the parlor, the kitchen, the barn, or under the spreading green tree, it was not the Home Class as now understood, but a class made up of the children of a neighborhood, meeting together under the guidance of a teacher for the study of the Sunday-school lesson. While the present conception of the Home Class does not ignore the value of such a gathering (in fact there are many such in existence, doing invaluable work), it is not regarded as an essential feature. Now the members of a Home Class may never meet for associated study.

The classes then had in mind were for the young. The talk was all about gathering in the children. By children, as appears from explanatory remarks, were meant those between the ages of six and twenty-one. The aim was to reach the neglected boys and girls. The conception was not as yet sufficiently enlarged to cause the workers to consider the neglected and neglecting men and women.

2. **Sunday-school Leaflet No. 6.** At the meeting of the State Sunday-school Association referred to, Dr. Duncan was chosen chairman of the State Executive Committee. This choice placed him in a position where he could forward his plan to the best advantage. Having now the power, he moved rapidly towards the realization of his idea. By the middle of June, 1881, he published the leaflet indicated, having the caption "HOME SUNDAY-SCHOOL CLASSES." It was only 4½x7 inches and was printed on but one side. In this document Dr. Duncan clearly stated the nature and purpose of the classes mentioned. The plan as there outlined is important as showing his conception of what they were to be and to accomplish. Two paragraphs are quoted here, that his idea at that time may be seen. After speaking of the vast numbers of unreached children in the state of New York (800,000), and after referring to the mistaken thought that all efforts to reach them must be confined to a church building, he says:—

One method of reaching these children has been by the organization of neighborhood schools; but in many sections there are not children enough to make a school. In such localities, and wherever possible, it is proposed to organize Sunday-school classes, either at the home of the teacher, or in any place where the children can meet together. These classes are to be recognized as members of the church school to which the teacher may belong, and the class record is to be entered upon the books of the school.

The class books, lesson papers, singing books, and Bibles are to be furnished by the parent school; the hour of service one that will be most convenient for the teacher; the scholars to be urged to attend the church services and school as often as convenient, and to be invited to take part in all its enter-

tainments. The exercises of the class should be of such a character as would best interest the scholars, and lead them to Christ and the Christian church.

Again attention is called to the fact that so far the Home Class really means a neighborhood class personally taught in some home. The term was used because it was supposed that the neighborhood classes would be more often taught in homes than in schoolhouses. The designation, too, was relied upon to popularize the movement on account of its suggestion of the informality, freedom, and sociability of a class taught in the atmosphere of the home. It was believed that a class with that title would be more attractive than one called a Neighborhood Class, and that it would be apt to hold together longer. This choice of terms, apparently fortuitous, was a happy one, for if the other had been employed the movement never would have been heard from to any great extent. The neighborhood class idea as a movement failed, though a large and increasing number of neighborhood classes are still carried on and are doing effectual work; but the title of Home Class led to the development of something better.

But it should be remarked that the main principle which characterizes the Home Department now was put forth with emphasis in that leaflet -- the recognition of home classes as a part of the Sunday-school. Without that recognition there could be no Home Department; that is the vital part of its constitution. In Leaflet No. 6 the effort was first made to extend the domain of the Sunday-school far beyond the walls which had hitherto shut it in.

3. The International Sunday-school Conven-

tion. As has been stated, Leaflet No. 6 was published in the middle of June, 1881. The Third International Sunday-school Convention was to meet in Toronto June 22-24, and at that gathering there would be a good opportunity to make the new plan widely known. Rev. Jeremiah Zimmerman, D.D., pastor of the First English Lutheran Church, Syracuse, N. Y., was a delegate to that body, and at the instance of Dr. Duncan he took with him copies of that leaflet for distribution. From the minutes of that convention it does not appear that he presented the scheme orally, but that he did so effectively is manifest from its being twice referred to by Dr. Vincent, who credited it at the time to Mr. Zimmerman himself. "A very great effort," he said, "has been made to reach the people dwelling in cities, towns, and villages, but as yet no effort has been made to reach the thousands of children on farms and in out-of-the-way places. He [Mr. Z.] suggests the formation of home classes, little parlor classes, meeting together where they cannot have a Sunday-school. Let a good man or woman get together five or six or eight or ten little people and teach them the Word of God; and where we have one Sunday-school now, let us have ten of these little classes."

Writing to Dr. Duncan under date of December 17, 1894, Dr. Zimmerman says: "Well do I remember, when a delegate to the Third International Sunday-school Convention in Toronto, Canada, that before going you gave me a large bundle of literature on the subject [Home Classes] which you had prepared, and requested me to bring your plans before the convention. This was in 1881, and on the twenty-second of June, the first day of the convention, I presented your plans to the

president, Hon. S. H. Blake, who gave it his hearty endorsement and spoke of Christ coming to the homes of people with the Bread of life. Various references were made to the Sunday-school in the home. . . . It is pleasant to remember having acted in this humble capacity. When we recall the grand development of that idea and its vast growth, we are taught again not to despise the day of small things."

The reception given to the plan in the International Convention greatly stimulated its author. What was endorsed by so experienced and noted a Sunday-school man as Dr. Vincent he felt must be indeed valuable. Hence he threw himself into the work of pushing it with more strength than ever. Dr. Duncan's next step was the publication of: —

4. **A Sunday-school newspaper.** This was a small four-page paper, the object of which was to push Sunday-school work in all its phases throughout the state, and, specifically, to urge forward efforts along the new lines. In the prospectus appearing in its first issue, September 1, 1881, it says: "In each issue will be presented plans for the organization of town associations, neighborhood Sunday-schools, home study Sunday-school classes, and the development of the work of the Woman's Aid Board organized at Cortland." It is hardly needful to say that this paper was of great service in making known the new plans and securing their adoption. Twenty thousand copies were printed the first year and distributed all over the state. Through its columns the Woman's Mission Aid Association and "Home Sunday-school Classes" soon became familiar terms to Sunday-school workers, and neighborhood classes were organized in many localities.

Incidentally it may be stated that this was the first paper started as an aid to the work of a State Sunday-school Association. It since has had many imitators.

The religious and secular papers of the state also were pressed into service, in so far as the sympathy of their conductors would permit. Thus, in its issue for September 22, 1881, there appeared in *The Northern Christian Advocate* of Syracuse, New York, an article by Mrs. Allen Butler, General Secretary of the Woman's Mission Aid Association, referring to the Home Class movement as "A Sunday-school Extension Society." The article was a column long — a column of the old-fashioned length. In it Mrs. Butler refers to the work of the Woman's Association, but lays the emphasis upon that part of it which relates to neighborhood classes. "Some neighborhoods," she says, "have not children enough for a school, but five or six are worth saving. These are to be gathered into 'Home Sunday-school Classes,' that some Christian women who cannot be teachers in church schools, because of their distance from them, will be willing to take into their homes. These classes are to be counted as classes of the church school, from which they will receive lesson papers and other supplies, and when entertainments of any kind are given for the benefit of the school, these classes will be invited, and eventually they will prove part of the school." From this it appears that the Woman's Association had heartily taken up the Home Class plan, and was pushing the organization of neighborhood classes with all its power. That power promised to be considerable, for already women were being enlisted in its work, and the secretary was making determined effort to get a

woman secretary for each county and for each town in the county.

But the neighborhood class had too many limitations to grow into a great movement. It could not be carried on except by some one personally present every Sabbath. In each case there must be found one near enough who had the consecration, zeal, and teaching ability to gather and hold such a class — and such a one in godless neighborhoods was by no means always easy to discover. Again, there was a division of thought as to the canvassing, some affirming that a thorough canvass of the state once every five years was often enough, while others advocated a canvass for each year. A five-year canvass was good for not much more than the correction of the faulty statistics of the previous four years, while a yearly canvass, in addition to getting reliable statistics, certainly would stir up each neighborhood so much oftener that there was hope of its keeping some Sunday-schools alive which without it were likely to die. The Woman's Aid Board planned to have a canvass every year. But even that was not often enough to hinder the Home Classes from disintegrating. On the part of those who conducted them there was not that feeling of responsibility which rested upon those who had to do with the larger numbers gathered into a school. They gave up their classes more easily. A lack of interest on the part of their scholars, a dwindling away of the class, a few Sundays of bad weather and bad going, a sense of unfitness, an inability to control on one or two occasions, a Sunday disinclination to work — any little difficulty, in many cases, would cause the teacher to give up the neighborhood class. It needed an element of continued

personal supervision, contact, and encouragement from the main school which as yet it lacked.

It is not surprising to note in an examination of the New York State Sunday-school Association reports for 1882 and 1883, that but little progress was made in the Home Class movement. Mrs. Butler reports in 1882 organizations of the Woman's Aid Board in nineteen out of the sixty counties of the state. In only one of the nineteen reports is there any reference to a Home Class, and that is to a single Home Class organized in connection with Good Will Sunday-school at Syracuse, of which Dr. Duncan himself was the founder. Throughout the convention the work of the Woman's Aid was fervidly praised, but little was said about its doing anything for Home Classes. Dr. Duncan himself did not refer to them. Possibly the subject was more fully ventilated in the side conference held by the Woman's Aid Association, a report of which was not made. That something had been done in planting neighborhood classes by the Woman's Association, however, is made evident by the passage of a resolution at a conference of that body during the sessions of the State Sunday-school Association, approving "the 'Home Class' system as eminently practical and useful, meeting a great want in this commonwealth." In the report of 1883 the Home Class is mentioned more frequently. Dr. Duncan advocates its utility and explains its constitution and its relation to the main school, and says that hundreds of Home Classes are being started. Miss M. A. Beecher of Verona, Oneida County, refers specifically to two, one of forty and the other of fourteen members, and mentions one other which soon resulted in a Sunday-school of forty

members, later increased to fifty, and adds: "That is the way our Home Classes go; they all run into Sunday-schools." Thus it is manifest that while something had been accomplished, the hopes cherished at its inception for the Home Class plan had by no means been realized.

III. **Development.** — In developing the Home Class plan the first step naturally had reference to: —

Canvassing. The infrequency of visitation and oversight was the evident weak spot. A canvass once in five years was of no value whatever in keeping up Home Classes. An annual canvass was better, but still the twelvemonth gap was too great. There were few Home Classes which would survive a year of isolation. The connection with the main school needed to be maintained oftener than that. That fact was soon discovered, and through the Woman's Mission Aid Board an attempt was made to exercise over the Home Classes a more continuous oversight. Of this fact we have a record in a mention made of the Home Class work in "The Sunday-school Quarterly," edited by Dr. Peloubet, for the Second Quarter of 1883. This mention is on some accounts so important that it is here quoted in full: —

REACHING THE MASSES BY THE SUNDAY-SCHOOL.

An effort is being made in New York to canvass the whole state in the interests of the Sabbath schools. It is said that there are now in that state 800,000 children not under any religious influences, and a plan has been put into operation to reach these neglected ones.

A Woman's Mission Sunday-school Aid Association has been formed. A lady for Town Secretary is to be secured for *each town*, who is to cause a thorough canvass to be made.

“The object is to bring every child, if possible, under Sunday-school instruction, either in a Church or Mission school, or in a Home Sunday-school class.

“The Town Secretary is expected to superintend the work in her own township, and report to the County Secretary.

“Let as many helpers be secured as are needed to visit every part of the town. The territory should be divided into *small districts*, and *visitors* appointed for each. It is expected that the officers of Town Associations will aid the Secretaries in their selection, and coöperate in this work. In case there be no union town organization, the Secretary should call a meeting of representatives from each of the churches, that district visitors may be appointed and encouraged to unite in this work. These should go to every house and learn:—

“Whether the residents attend church or not — and where.

“What children are in Sunday-school — and where.

“How many are not in such schools, and if they are willing to go — and where.

“Then, at another meeting, report and give to each church a list of those who wish to attend their church and school.

“Where children are found too far away from any school to be willing to attend, then a Mission school should be organized if there are children enough, or some Christian woman living in the neighborhood should be asked to take them into her house and teach them as her ‘Home Sunday-school Class.’

“This class should be considered a part of her church school, to which she will look for lesson leaves, Sunday-school papers, etc.

“When there is to be an entertainment or picnic, this class should be invited to attend, as a part of the school.

“The organization of these Home Classes is perhaps the *special feature* of the Woman’s Mission Sunday-school Aid Association, and should be *very prominent* in the town canvasses.

“While statistics are gathered as suggested, let the *main* work of bringing every child under Sunday-school or Bible instruction be earnestly pressed.

“This is not a *mere canvass* of the town to obtain statistics. Such an effort was made years ago, but failed for various reasons.

“This new work maintains a *continuous oversight*.

“Each of the visitors is given not more than *twenty or twenty-five* families for her field.”

Further information or reference to this plan of work can be obtained from Wm. A. Duncan, Esq., of Syracuse, N. Y., Chairman of the Executive Committee.

The quoted parts of this statement were taken from a circular issued in 1882 jointly prepared by Dr. Duncan and Edward Danforth, respectively the chairman and the secretary of the New York State Sunday-school Executive Committee. The publication in so prominent a Sunday-school periodical of this method of reaching the neglected districts called wide attention to it, and gave to it a fresh and strong impulse. From it we learn:—

1. That so early as 1882 the organization of Home Classes had come to be considered the special feature of the Woman's Aid Association.

2. That in canvassing the work had been reduced to a practical basis, the suggestion being made of dividing the territory in each case into small districts, to each of which a visitor should be appointed. The districts were to be so divided that each visitor should not have to call upon more than twenty or twenty-five families. By this arrangement no visitor was given a task which from the first was too discouraging to be undertaken. Her field was not so great but that she could go over it as often as occasion should require.

3. That a mere yearly canvass was not contemplated so much as the continuous oversight which should follow. Inasmuch as quarterlies were then coming to take the place of lesson leaves and yearly question books, the touch of the visitors with the Home Classes inevitably was determined by the necessity of supplying them once every three months with their lesson periodicals. Contact with them every quarter, instead of once in twelve months or once in five years, certainly was a great step forward.

Turning back now to the New York State report for 1883, we see the reason for the good report made from Binghamton. The ladies there had been operating under the suggestions of the circular. Telling of the work there, Mrs. J. H. Barnes says : —

Our first plan was to make a thorough canvass; and we found in the city of Binghamton six hundred out of Sunday-school, of whom four hundred promised to attend. But we failed to find out how many did attend. We then formed our present plan. We invited a lady from each of the fourteen Protestant Sunday-schools in our city to meet with us and devise plans for our work. Seven ladies responded to this call. We adopted a constitution and by-laws, and divided our city into very small districts, so as not to be burdensome to any one.

At the next meeting, one week after, thirty were present. Eleven churches have now united with us, and we have some seventy canvassers throughout the city. We have not finished the work yet, but we have visited, I think, over a thousand families. Each visitor has a book and is required to keep a list of the families, ask whether they attend church, how many children attend Sunday-school, and how many will attend, and whether they have a Bible. We found many without Bibles; these we supplied from the Bible Society.

If we find cases of destitution, they are reported to the denomination of their preference. We intend to persist until every child attends some Sabbath-school, etc.

The organization thus perfected in Binghamton proved to be permanent. In the following year, 1884, Mrs. Barnes again reported as follows :—

A thorough canvass was made last year. In the city of Binghamton there is the most thorough organization that we know of for our Woman's Mission Aid work. Each visitor is made responsible for her district for a year. The children are all known to her, so that she can have a personal influence over them, which will go further than anything else in making the work permanent. What is true in other departments is true in this ; that when well inaugurated, there need not be a frequent recanvassing of the territory, but a constant watchfulness which would detect any falling off, and also discover newcomers in the district who need to be drawn within the Sunday-school circle.

Out of this plan of canvassing was developed the HOME CLASS VISITOR, without whom the Home Class never could succeed except in occasional instances. So far, indeed, the Visitor was simply a canvasser, looking after the general interests of her Sunday-school field and having no especial responsibility for any Home Classes in it beyond stimulating both teachers and scholars. Just when the Visitor assumed the place she now occupies with reference to the Home Class it would be interesting to know ; on a subsequent page it may be pointed out. But evidently the change from a mere canvasser to being the conductor of the Home Class was a process of evolution. Inasmuch as so often the teacher of the Home Class could not be relied upon to continue the

work, it was in the course of things that more and more responsibility should fall upon the visitor. Teachers found it convenient to rely upon the visitors for their quarterly supplies for lesson helps, which were often delivered to the scholars themselves. The visitors reported the needs of the Home Classes to the superintendent ; made known to him how they were getting on ; looked after the interests of the Classes in regard to entertainments, picnics, etc. ; kept them informed of what was taking place in the main school ; carried the Class collections to the treasury of the school ; visited the homes of the Home Class scholars ; urged, when it seemed advisable, that they should join the main school, etc. Thus the visitor in time came into closer contact with the members of a Home Class than did the teacher herself ; and when the teacher gave up her work the loss was comparatively little felt, for the existence of the Class had ceased to devolve upon her. This evolution of the canvasser into the conductor of the Home Class was very slow, for the idea of holding a neighborhood class, under the term Home Class, taught *viva voce* by a teacher, was one which was tenaciously held. It did not seem possible to have a class in any other way. It was this conception which stood in the way of progress.

The next step in the development of the Home Class idea was in the segregation of the individuals of the Class so that their study of the lesson by themselves should count the same as though there were a meeting of the members for the consideration of the lesson under the guidance of a teacher. When this actually occurred there was again a broadening of the domain of the Sunday-school.

The work of organizing Home Classes on the basis explained was still vigorously pushed. How many were begun in 1883-84 does not appear in the minutes of the New York State Sunday-school Association, held in Oswego June 3-5, 1884, probably for the reason that the Woman's Aid Board held a conference by itself during the sessions of the convention, the proceedings of which were not incorporated in the records. In the report made to the convention by the Woman's Board, Miss Mary A. Beecher referred to the usefulness of Home Classes, particularly in winter when many schools are closed, and affirmed that there were a great many Home Classes not connected with any Sunday-schools.

During the spring and summer of 1884, Hon. Edward Danforth, secretary of the New York State Sunday-school Association, who had become greatly interested in the Home Class idea, visited the various state Sunday-school conventions of New England, explaining the purpose of the Home Class, telling what had been accomplished by it in New York, and urging its general adoption. Of the results of his efforts we can only guess, but must presume that they were not without some fruitage. It can at least be confidently said that they helped to advertise the plan so that they forwarded its final adoption.

It has been said that the next step in the development of the Home Class plan was to be in the line of individual study of the lesson. That advance in the scheme came about through its adoption by

The Congregational Sunday-School and Publishing Society. This Society has its headquarters in Boston. It is both a publishing house and a missionary

society. Its Publishing Department and its Missionary Department are entirely distinct from each other, each having a treasury of its own. The one department depends upon the patronage of the churches and the Sunday-schools in the purchase of its books and periodicals; the other depends upon their gifts, which are applied to the planting of new Sunday-schools and to the sustaining of needy Sunday-schools. Having two such departments, this Society was admirably qualified to take up the Home Class idea and push it into recognition and acceptance. Through its Sunday-school periodicals, especially *The Pilgrim Teacher*, which goes into the hands of ministers, superintendents, and teachers, and through its missionaries in the different states and territories, it had powerful advocates for the system which surpassed all that hitherto had spoken for it. Its Missionary Department, then recently reorganized, was rapidly growing, and was extending its work into the new fields of the West. Hitherto the Home Class plan had been merely a New York State affair; the adoption of it by the Congregational Sunday-School and Publishing Society made it national. It placed upon it the endorsement of a great denominational body, and thus called the attention to it of other denominational bodies.

Unquestionably the attention of Rev. A. E. Dunning, D.D., then Secretary of the Society, and now the Editor of *The Congregationalist*, was first called to it by Dr. Duncan through circulars and perhaps by correspondence. A letter written by Dr. Dunning in 1884 expresses his belief in the plan as being the most feasible one yet presented for reaching those not in the Sunday-school. It was not, however, adopted by the Society

until the spring of 1885, and then at the instance of Rev. S. W. Dike, LL.D., then of Royalton, Vermont, and now Secretary of the National Divorce Reform League. Dr. Dike had inaugurated what he called a Home Department in connection with his Sunday-school, for the purpose of securing the study of the Bible and inducing religious activity in the home. In his sociological studies Dr. Dike had been led to emphasize the home as the main factor of power and as the vital center, which, first of all, should be set right. Believing that with the suggestion of concurrent study of the Sunday-school lesson he could do something towards introducing the systematic study of the Bible in the home, Dr. Dike introduced the Home Department into his school, and with such success that he was led to suggest to Dr. Dunning the advisability of its being recommended by the Society to other schools and pastors.

The suggestion of Dr. Dike commended itself to Dr. Dunning, and a circular was prepared setting forth the purpose and plan of the Home Department, and calling attention to its benefits in those places where it had been tried ; for, as the circular shows, it had been in operation in other schools. It says of one school in Connecticut, that it "has in its Home Department eight of its members who have removed to Utah." Accompanying the circular were the three simple means relied upon for starting and carrying on a Home Department — a letter, a pledge, and a report card to be sent to each one in a church parish whom it was desired to enroll as a member. The letter and the pledge are here reproduced so that their bearing upon the development of the Home Class plan can be readily seen : —

THE LETTER.

Dear Friend,—Aware that many are deprived of the privilege of the study of the Bible in the regular service of the Sunday-school, on account of age, infirmity, distance from the church, and similar reasons, our Sunday-school has a Home Department to aid all such, to be composed of those who will comply with the following conditions, which are made as simple as possible, in order to enlist all that we can in the work:—

1. Sign and return the pledge enclosed, which asks you to spend not less than a half hour each Sunday in the study of the Sunday-school lesson for the day, whenever you are able to do so.

2. Keep for yourself, or for yourself and others of your family who are also members, upon the enclosed report card, a record of your attendance upon the study of the lesson, marking with x x any Sunday when you attend the main Sunday-school.

3. On the last Sunday in each quarter, put the report card in an envelope and address it to the superintendent of the Sunday-school.

Lesson Quarterlies, either the larger or smaller, will be furnished you (by mail or otherwise) each quarter at five cents each for the Senior, and four cents for Intermediate grades; and they will be sent free to any who feel unable to pay for them. As far as we are able, you shall be made acquainted with the work of our school and of this department.

It is hoped that this simple, easy plan will receive your cordial support.

Faithfully yours

.....

THE PLEDGE.

We, the undersigned, agree to join the Home Department of the Sunday-school, and to

spend at least half an hour each Sunday in the study of the lesson for that day, unless prevented by sickness or other good cause. We will continue our membership till we notify the superintendent of withdrawal.

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This plan was not adopted by the Congregational Sunday-School and Publishing Society in ignorance of what had been done by Dr. Duncan in New York. It was thoroughly aware of the essential similarity between the Home Class and the Home Department plans. Both were efforts for Bible study extension beyond the confines of the Sunday-school room, and each incorporated the study thus secured as a part of the work of the Sunday-school itself. The Pilgrim Teacher, which became the organ of the Home Department, thus speaks of the new movement in its issue of June, 1885 : —

The Sunday-school at Royalton, Vt., has undertaken, at the suggestion of Rev. S. W. Dike, a Home Department for those who, because of infirmity, age, distance from church, or other reasons, are unable to attend the main school. Families where such recruits are likely to be found are called upon by some officer or teacher in the school, and the plan is explained. Those who are willing to accept the invitation, sign a card, promising to spend at least half an hour each Sunday on the study of the lesson, unless prevented by good cause. A record for each Sunday is kept on a report card, which is sent to the superintendent at the close of the quarter. A special mark indicates Sundays on which they attend the main school. The school agrees to keep these members informed of matters of interest, and to assist them in all ways in its power. No doubt by this means many may be retained in relations to the Sunday-schools who

would otherwise be compelled to drop out altogether. The idea on which this plan is based has been urged for years by Superintendent Duncan of New York, and has been put in successful operation.

It is plain, therefore, that the Home Department was not a new invention but a modification of the Home Class idea. Still it was a modification and helped to develop it in several important particulars.

1. The Home Department had for its purpose the starting of actual home classes. It contemplated the study of the lesson in the home by all the members of the family who could be induced to join in the plan. Its ideal was a class composed of the members of the household of which the father or the mother should be the conductor. In the circular of which mention has been made there was a reference to such a class, which consisted of "a household of eleven members, including four grandparents," one of whom acted as teacher. Hitherto the Home Class had been practically a neighborhood class, though doubtless there were some instances where the title absolutely applied.

2. The Home Department provided for individual study of the lesson. If but one in a family signed the pledge card, he was by that act constituted a member of the Department and of the Sunday-school.

3. The Home Department did away with the hitherto supposed necessity of a teacher. No reference is made to that official in any of its documents. The members of the household were merely pledged to study the lesson a half hour each Sunday. It was left to them, without suggestion, to determine whether they should select some one to conduct their study after the usual manner or not.

4. The Home Department aimed to unite in home study of the Bible not merely the young, but also those of all ages. It invited the aged, the infirm, the sick, the non-attendants of the church, etc. The Home Class so far had rather appealed to the thought of instructing those between the ages of six and twenty-one.

Indeed, the mistake of the Sunday-school has been that too generally that has been considered to be its mission. Its conductors have been too easily satisfied with securing a fair proportion of those of "school age." The Home Class movement was at first projected upon the current notion with regard to the ages of those whom it should reach. Now it has a wider outlook. It aims to induce the study of the Bible by those of every age, the emphasis of its address being to those of mature years. It is hoped that its success with them will have some effect in changing the constitution of the Sunday-school itself so that less rarely than now classes will be seen in it composed of the most prominent and influential business men. The ideal Sunday-school will not be reached until it becomes the teaching session of the church and congregation.

The two things of chief value added by the Home Department to the Home Class were : the segregation of the class, so that an individual might study by himself, and the broadening of its purpose so as to enlist even those of extreme old age. These two additions certainly greatly enlarged the Home Class idea and increased its practical utility. But it must be said that the Home Department never realized the supreme purpose for which it was formed. Except in rare instances actual family classes never were established. The securing of the

study of the Bible by the family, as a family, in almost all instances proved to be impracticable. In those families where there was the disposition, the children already were in the Sunday-school and the parents were encouraging them in the study of the Scriptures. In other cases the parents were too indifferent or too sensible of their own unfitness to undertake it. Thus it came to pass, when solicited, that they sent their children to the Sunday-school, if they were not already going, and rarely did anything more. Occasionally one of the parents, seldom both, would sign the pledge card for study of the lesson in the home. The appeal was most successful in securing the signatures of the aged, the infirm, the sick, the "shut-ins." To these the opportunity came as a godsend. It was welcomed by them as a breath of fragrant spring air through an open window which long had been closed.

Further, the Home Department plan, on this basis, did not largely succeed, because it did not make use of the continuous oversight which had been provided for in the Home Class system. It made no provision for systematic visitation and overcare, but depended entirely too much upon the voluntary persistence of the Home Department student in keeping up his study and in making his quarterly reports. He was asked at the end of each quarter to make out his report and send it in, and then it was proposed to send him his lesson supplies by mail, or, if it happened to be convenient, by hand. If anything has been demonstrated, it is that solitary study, without any personal supervision or outside contact, will be dropped in almost every instance after the novelty has worn off, except in the case of the "shut-ins."

Actual trial has shown that the Visitor is the most important feature in the Home Class plan. Without her frequent visits, encouraging and sympathizing words, reports of the main school, invitations to socials, notifications of Home Department days, etc., all of which bring the solitary student into touch with the main school so that he feels the impulse of its life — without these the Department would dwindle almost from the start and would soon die out.

The Home Department requisites issued by the Congregational Sunday-School and Publishing Society were adopted by Dr. Duncan, the Field Secretary of the Society, and used by him throughout the state of New York. They put a new phase upon the Home Class work, and were employed by him to great advantage. In that state Home Departments multiplied more rapidly than anywhere else, for he had all the engineering of the Woman's Mission Aid Board to push them. And in that state, too, they succeeded better than in other states because they were persistently looked after by the canvassing visitors. And it is just here, in all probability, that we must trace the transformation of the canvasser, or visitor, into the conductor of the Home Class. As has been noted, the Home Department dispensed with the teacher as a necessity. All that was needed was that there should be some one who should deliver the new lesson helps required, receive the report cards and the contributions, impart the necessary information, etc. This, in Dr. Duncan's working of the plan, was done by visitors. In his system each visitor was given from twenty to twenty-five homes to look after. The students in those homes came to be looked

upon by her as her class, and in time was called her class. Thus was gradually developed a HOME CLASS such as was not contemplated either in the original Home Class plan or in the Home Department. The Home Class, as in most cases now constituted, is made up of isolated members, with now and then a group, in different homes, looked after by one Visitor. A number of such classes makes up a Home Department.

After several years of trial by the Congregational Sunday-School and Publishing Society on the basis already indicated, the writer hereof, as the Editor of that Society, in consultation with Dr. Duncan, reformed the plan of the Home Department to correspond with its most successful working. Recognizing the fact that what is everybody's business is nobody's business, it was decided to place the Home Department of a Sunday-school upon the same footing as the Intermediate Department, or the Primary Department, and assign to it a superintendent who should be entirely responsible for its conduct, subject to the higher authority of the superintendent of the school and its executive committee. The system of visitation was incorporated, each visitor being recognized as having full charge of her Home Class. The corps of visitors was ranked along with the teachers in the main school. It was recommended that quarterly reports of the Home Department should be made to the main school and that quarterly reports of all the departments, including their own, should be made to the members of the Home Department. Thus, and for the first time, in the documents issued, the aggregation of Home Classes in connection with any Sunday-school was constituted into a veritable HOME

DEPARTMENT. This was the full flowering of the original HOME CLASS.

It may seem strange that this final step was not sooner reached. The Home Department, as it now exists, appears to be the only rational and practicable form by which it can successfully be carried on. But no invention ever is put out at first entirely perfect in all its parts. It does well if at the outset it demonstrates that it has some capability of accomplishing the purpose for which it was constructed. It is only by actual experiment with it that its actual excellencies will be proven, and its defects be made apparent. The Home Class simply has followed the universal law of development. It is sufficient praise of its originator to say that in his conception of extending the domain of the Sunday-school to all outside of its walls who would study with the school he seized hold of an idea which was worth perpetuating and developing. In that idea was the germ which has resulted in the present HOME DEPARTMENT.

IV. **Adoption.**—As has been noted, a great impulse was given to the Home Department through its being taken up by the Congregational Sunday-School and Publishing Society. A still greater impetus was administered to it by the final reformation of the plan just alluded to. It then everywhere commended itself to Sunday-school workers as being both desirable and feasible. Other denominations adopted it, asking permission of the Congregational Sunday-School and Publishing Society to use its copyrighted requisites.¹ State Sunday-school associations gave to it their hearty recommendation. Some states appointed secretaries who

¹ In accordance with its custom, with relation to all its publications, the

should devote a part or all of their time towards introducing the Home Department into the Sunday-schools. The International and the World's Sunday-school conventions endorsed it, and the International Sunday-school Executive Committee have made the stimulation of Home Departments a part of its plan in its interdenominational work. The Home Department now has received such wide acceptance that it cannot but appeal for adoption to every Sunday-school in the land. While the percentage of schools making use of it is still comparatively small, the number is rapidly, even phenomenally, growing, and the suggestion is that soon there will not be a Sunday-school which pretends to be well equipped which will not have its Home Department.

The growth in sentiment concerning it is well illustrated in the minutes of the New York State Sunday-school Association for 1894. Attention has been called to the fact that in the reports for 1882 to 1884 there were but few references to Home Classes. The report for 1894 is teeming with remarks and allusions to the Home Department. No one thing so much occupied the thoughts of the convention as this. There were two addresses on the subject, each being from one who had had practical experience in establishing Home Departments. The Home Department was spoken of by every

Congregational Sunday-School and Publishing Society copyrighted the pledge card, report card, letter, circular, and all other requisites for the Home Department issued by it. That copyright, however, has not stood in the way of the adoption of the plan by other denominational bodies or by Sunday-school associations, for upon request the Society always has freely granted the privilege of copying them, except in the case of individual publishers. It has been deemed best to refuse them, lest upon the foundation thus secured some enterprise may be started for the enriching of private parties. So long as the privilege remains with the denominations and Sunday-school associations alone, it is felt that the Home Department will be administered for the good of all.

missionary, and by nearly every district superintendent. One hundred and forty-one such Departments were mentioned by delegates from the floor. One judicial district was cited by the Executive Committee as having started two hundred new Departments within the year, and as having in all one thousand Home Classes. One fifth of all the churches in this district was credited with having Home Departments. The Sixth District was reported as having 184 Departments with a total membership of 7,120, divided into 800 classes with as many visitors. A total of 734 from fifty-two of these Departments were reported as transferred to the schools with which they were connected. Forty-nine other Sunday-schools had manifested their desire to organize Home Departments. In the city of Brooklyn it was said that fifty-three Departments had been undertaken, and that in them there was a membership of 1,800. By means of a canvass in which all the denominations joined, twenty-seven Departments had been established in the town of Stockbridge, into which 1,400 members had been gathered. The total membership in the Departments throughout the state was put at about 20,000. Manifestly a great change had taken place with regard to the estimate placed upon the value of this extension work. Probably an examination of other state Sunday-school reports would exhibit the same adoption of the Home Department, though not quite to the same degree. Connecticut, Massachusetts, New Jersey, Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Missouri, and Canada come near to rivaling New York in its enthusiasm for the Home Department, and in the number of Home Departments established.

In New York one tenth of the churches this year

(1895) are reported as having Home Departments, connected with which are 4,500 visitors who have under their care 27,500 Home Class students.

This adoption of the Home Department, however, has not come about by publication alone. It is the result of indefatigable pushing. Not only must the origin of the Home Department be ascribed to Dr. W. A. Duncan, but its success as well. He is the one who never has rested in forcing it upon public attention. Others have indeed advocated it, and to them due credit must be given. Dr. Dike has done much for the cause with pen and voice. His articles in *The Pilgrim Teacher*, *Sunday School Times*, *The Andover Review*, and other periodicals have effectively presented the Home Department to many thousands of readers. In adopting it for the Congregational Sunday-School and Publishing Society Dr. Dunning gave it a great uplift, and always has contributed to it the full measure of his wide influence. The success of the Home Department in Connecticut must be ascribed to W. H. Hall, the secretary of the Connecticut State Sunday-school Association, and in Massachusetts to J. N. Dummer, State Sunday-school Secretary. In New York Timothy Hough, State Secretary, Rev. E. P. St. John and Miss Grace E. Griswold have not labored in vain in the planting of Home Departments in the Sixth District. Their work has been wonderfully effectual. Rev. G. B. F. Hallock, of Rochester, N. Y., also has accomplished much, first in organizing a model Home Department in connection with his church, and then in advocating the plan both in effective addresses and articles in religious journals. Time and space would fail to notice all who

have had an honorable part in contributing to the triumph of this movement. But while others have given it an impetus now and then, Dr. Duncan has been urging it all the while. By circulars, by addresses innumerable, by private conversations, by taxing correspondence, he has unremittingly kept the Home Department before the public until it has made its legitimate impression. He has believed in it, talked for it, written for it, argued for it, lived for it, as no other man has. In the most of instances those who have spoken for it have been inspired by him to speak. In New York he secured the organization of the Woman's Mission Aid Association, without which that state never could have been covered with such a network of Home Departments. In 1887, at Chicago, in an address during its sessions, Dr. Duncan called the attention of the International Sunday-school Convention to the merits of the Home Department. He secured the unanimous commendation of that convention for it in the meeting which was held at Pittsburgh in 1890. He was the author of a paper on the subject which was read before the World's Sunday-school Convention, held in London in 1889. Through his advocacy at the World's Sunday-school Convention, held in St. Louis in 1893, the Executive Committee reported the following recommendation, which was unanimously adopted:—

Your Committee desires to recognize the Home Department of the Sunday-school as presented by Dr. W. A. Duncan of New York, and to commend the same to the Sunday-school workers throughout the world. We believe the adoption of this plan will increase the membership of the Sunday-school and extend the benefits of the school to many who cannot regularly attend its sessions.

The sessions of the International Sunday-school Convention were held at the same place, upon days just preceding, and that body, through his efforts, passed the following resolution : —

Resolved, That it is the sense of this Convention that the Home Class Department of the Sunday-school is a most practical and efficient method of Sunday-school work, and we do most heartily commend its adoption by all schools, and urge that all State and Provincial Associations make definite and systematic efforts to secure its general adoption.

Not only has Dr. Duncan labored most effectively to establish the Home Department in this country, but he has also introduced it abroad. While on a trip to Europe in 1891 he presented the plan to the Executive Committee of the London Sunday-school Union, an organization of great power and influence. It approved itself to the Committee and now is incorporated into its working scheme. That fact promises a great deal with reference not only to popularizing the movement in England, but also with regard to propagating it on the continent, for that body has missionaries at work in various countries in Europe endeavoring to dissipate ignorance and superstition by establishing Sunday-schools for the study of the Bible. In England the movement was originally under the immediate direction of Rev. J. B. Paton, LL.D., of Nottingham, who has so effectively presented it that other Sunday-school unions are likely to adopt it. It has, besides, the powerful advocacy of Hon. F. F. Belsey, chairman of the Sunday-school Union, known quite well and greatly esteemed on this side of the water. His Home Department, connected with the Congregational Sunday-school at Rochester, is

probably one of the largest and most efficient in England. Already there are many Home Departments in England, one with a membership of two hundred being reported in connection with the school at Nottingham, whose pastor is Rev. W. Crosbie. The movement there has gathered such momentum now that it can hardly fail. It has been heard from also in France, where it has been introduced and where it is likely to make some headway. In Bohemia, through Dr. Duncan again, it secured a beginning by the labors of Rev. A. M. Clark, D.D., and Rev. J. S. Porter, of Prague. The latter writes of it that it is fast making its way. To that country it is peculiarly adapted, for the Austrian laws prohibit independent or officially "unrecognized" meetings, so that the Home Department can accomplish what cannot be done through the Sunday-school. In some other European countries it will be found more feasible to establish veritable Home Classes studying the same lesson than it will to attempt a Sunday-school. In Bohemia a Home Class leaflet is published, called "*Pomucka*," which goes to many families in Austria, Germany, Russia, and even America. While the Russian censor rules out all evangelical papers, somehow he allows this to pass, so that it is studied in the Czar's empire by hundreds of Bohemians in their homes. The Home Department has also found its way to India through Dr. J. L. Phillips of the London Sunday-school Union; and thus through the energy and persistence of one man this form of evangelistic effort has just about belted the globe.

In this country the multiplication of Home Departments was such and the interest in the plan so great that it was deemed expedient by a conference of Sunday-school

workers, representing all portions of the United States and Canada, held at Chautauqua in the summer of 1892, to organize the International Home Department Association. The full list of officers is given upon one of the initial pages. Of course there was but one man thought of for the presidency, and he was the one by whose untiring persistence the movement had become so successful. The purpose of this Association is to promote the formation of Home Departments in all lands in connection with evangelical Sunday-schools and to increase their efficiency. It is hoped that this Association will prove to be a powerful agency in accomplishing the object for which it was formed. Already it has issued circulars, distributed information, published normal class leaflets, and proposes to increase its efforts as the way may open and as circumstances may demand.

At a meeting of the International Sunday-school Executive Committee at Chautauqua in August, 1894, with the International Sunday-school Field Workers, the Home Department came up for consideration. After a presentation of the facts concerning it by Dr. Duncan, Mr. B. F. Jacobs, of Chicago, moved that a new department be added to the work of the International Executive Committee ; namely, that of the Home Department, and that the officers chosen in 1892 be accepted and recognized as the officers of the International Home Department Association, and that they be authorized to issue such circulars, letters, requisites, and addresses as they may deem necessary for the prosecution, unification, and development of the work. Mr. Jacobs urged the adoption of his motion, saying that he believed this to be one of the most important of the new movements in

Sunday-school work, and that it should be pushed in all parts of our land and introduced into all Sunday-schools. The resolution was unanimously adopted, and thus the International Home Department Association became a recognized department of the International Sunday-school Association, and the Home Department itself was commended with all the weight of its influence to all Sunday-schools everywhere. The International Executive Committee has taken up the work thus assigned to it with vigor. Its Field Secretary, Mr. William Reynolds, in the interdenominational meetings held by him in almost every portion of the country, has not failed to make known the aim of the Home Department and to press its adoption as being admirably qualified to introduce the study of the Word into homes, and so evangelize many a neighborhood. In about every convention held under the auspices of the International Executive Committee the Home Department has a place upon the program. Its consideration there insures its having a place in minor conventions, so that it seems certain that its merits will soon become known to every wide-awake Sunday-school worker.

The reader now is fully acquainted with the vital facts concerning the genesis and development of the Home Department. If the story has been rightly told, not only has an interest been excited relative to its birth and progress, but also a profound impression has been made in regard to the evident magnitude of its future. The generous seed-sowing of the past, together with the persistent and careful cultivation which has followed it, is now showing its ripening results, so that the fields are becoming white to the harvest.

II.

THE PURPOSE OF THE HOME DEPARTMENT.

I. STATED.

FROM the preceding pages the readers already must have gathered a clear idea of the aim of the Home Department, or the history has been but poorly presented. Still it is well to compact that which has been stated in general terms into a definition. A definition, if properly made, will give a clear conception of the work to be done, will stimulate those who engage in that work, and will be fruitful in suggesting expedients for its accomplishment. Bearing in mind, then, the importance of such a statement let this definition of the design of the Home Department be carefully weighed :—

The purpose of the Home Department is to secure, through associated effort in connection with the Sunday-school, a general and systematic study of the Scriptures.

Truly, the aim is a great one. It is worthy of all the aid which can be given to it by any one. It is inspiring to think of the end to be accomplished. The Bible is not now generally and systematically studied. For that matter, it never has been. Perhaps, on the whole, it never has been examined with such fresh and deep interest as at the present time. The increased sales and distribution of Bibles indicate the new hold which God's Word has taken upon the people. More people are

studying it than ever before. And yet but few, comparatively, are systematically poring over its pages. The Book does not have the place in the home which it ought to have. In families generally it is an unstudied and almost an unread volume. The newspaper, the magazine, the novel crowd it out. This fact is a menacing one. Character is determined by reading, and character determines one's reading. The kind of literature which he devours with avidity shows what one is. Strong character cannot be grown out of sensational reading. Reverence cannot be cultivated with slangy, "Bad-Boy" books. Fear of God is not the result of the perusal of skeptical arguments. Purity is not encouraged by the columns of scandal which appear in our daily newspapers. In the reading which comes into the home there is much to be commended. Undeniably it is better than it used to be, though in negligent families there is still a fearful amount of demoralizing and destructive fiction. But where it is reasonably good there is needed, besides, the tonic of the Scriptures. Only through them will the young be brought up in righteousness, purity, reverence, and the fear of the Lord. Wherever the Bible is studied the home is sweetened and purified. It is because of this fact that God gave the commandment: "And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be upon thine heart: and thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up" (Deut. 6 : 6, 7). In requiring his words to be the main theme of the household, God was but seeking to develop the ideal home. The Home Department

is but an instrument to give effect to this commandment of the Lord. It seeks to give the Bible its rightful place in the home.

It will be observed that the definition contemplates the general study of the Bible. It would have been unwise to speak of its universal study, for that cannot be accomplished prior to the dawn of the millennium. Whenever the Bible is devoutly searched by every one then indeed the triumphant reign of Christ will have begun. The aim of the Home Department is to bring about the general study of the Bible. And this means that it is not an effort to reach the neglected children or youth merely, but the men and women as well. It addresses itself to every member of society. No Home Department has done its full work until it has solicited every one, young and old, learned and ignorant, rich and poor, not already a Bible student, to join in the study of God's Word.

Again it should be noted that it is aimed to secure the systematic study of the Bible. Systematic study is better than desultory or even regular reading. Better a half hour of close study than a dozen hours of superficial reading or reading which has merely for its object the perusal of the whole Bible in a specified time. It is not intended to minimize the value of thoughtful, meditative, devotional reading of the Scriptures. That is beyond estimate. But it is the last result to be obtained. It is the act of one who already is in communion with God and who desires that communion to be deeper. Study of the Scriptures naturally comes first, and a pledge to engage in it can be obtained; the other may follow in due time as a result. That, then, is the thing to

be aimed at, with the assurance that if entered into earnestly it cannot but affect the heart and life.

But study, if it be pursued, should be systematic, not merely as to time but as to purpose. It should aim to get somewhere. Hence it is that the Home Department has been connected with the Sunday-school. The lessons in it are selected by the International Lesson Committee, who are instructed by the International Sunday-school Convention to give to the world the best possible course of study in the Bible during the term of their existence. The Committee no longer are under orders to cover the whole Bible within a specified time, and hence can be more thorough in the consideration given to any one portion of the Scriptures when it is desirable to do so. Under the guidance of that Committee a scheme is followed by which at one time one is studying the life of Christ in one of the gospels or in all of them; at another he is tracing out the history of Israel, noting the overruling providences of God; at still another he is following the history of the early Church as shown in the book of Acts, or considering the doctrines of Christianity as laid down in the Epistles. And in his study he is aided by the wonderfully full and suggestive lesson helps which now are issued by the different denominational and lesson publishing houses. Such study is both stimulating and attractive, and tends to make one search deeper.

Lastly, the definition emphasizes associated study of the Bible. There is a power in the very thought of association with a multitude of others. The soldier shows it. Conscious that he is not to be thought of as a mere unit, he is immensely more of a man. Again and again has it

been exhibited in the history of the International Lesson movement. The idea that the same lesson is being studied every week by millions of others in all lands has been a wonderful inspiration to the individual. Strenuous efforts have been made by some to get the Sunday-schools to take up other series of lessons, but they have been unwilling to break step and fall out of the ranks. Some have gone out for a while but have returned again, missing the sense of companionship with the great multitude. The Home Department makes use of this power. It proffers to every one the privilege of studying with those who belong to a certain Sunday-school, and through them, with that vast host which is engaged upon the same text, printed in many different languages. Few persons would persistently follow a course of study alone, but many will be led to continue if they know that many others are pursuing the same course with them. The Home Department, therefore, presses the thought* of associated study of the Scriptures.

In 1885 with reference to the Home Class Bishop Vincent said : —

If everybody went to church and Sunday-school, a little school at home besides for Bible study, would be in order. Church and Sunday-school would be worth more because of the Home Bible School. The lessons would be better prepared in advance, better recited at the time, better remembered afterward. Home would be better because of this fireside class — this sitting-room Sunday-school. Church and Sunday-school would both be worth more to everybody.

But then not everybody does go to church and Sunday-school, and to him who does not go, the school at home becomes invaluable. He will be more likely to go. And he will get some good — great good — until he does go. He

will get a taste at home of the precious things they have in the sanctuary. Sometimes people who want to go, cannot. Distance hinders. Weather hinders. Illness hinders. To those people the stay-at-home school is a blessing. It passes the time away swiftly and pleasantly. It takes people "out of themselves." It prevents gloominess and melancholia. It brings good company into the house—prophets and apostles, kings and angels, and the *Christ himself*. It opens great windows that give far-reaching perspectives. A Sunday-school at home is a great thing for a home. Let us have a country full of such schools.

There are neighborhoods so far removed from church and Sunday-school privileges, that unless the blessings of Bible study and religious worship are brought to them they will never be reached. It is a long way to town, or to the country church or schoolhouse. Parents are indifferent. Neglect falls into habit. Children grow up utterly ignorant of law and gospel. In such neighborhoods as these there must be home Sunday-schools. Somebody must open parlor, sitting-room, or kitchen and invite the neighbors in. The lesson leaves may be ordered, the Bible brought, a few songs learned, the lesson for the day studied, and papers and books distributed. Think of the neighborhood home schools that might be organized, and the amount of work that might be done. Think of the new element put into everyday life by that school—the consciences quickened, the interest in divine things awakened, the better literature distributed, and the best religious work carried on.

The habit of taking an hour at home for personal Bible study, whether one goes to the places of public gathering or not, is of inestimable value, in the fact that it encourages Bible reading apart from the usual church surroundings. In seeming a little less publicly religious, it becomes a little more personally religious. We are so much inclined to make religious observances a thing of places and times and congregations, that to break loose now and then from the

regular order—or to break into the regular order with personal service of thought and prayer—will make religion more real. A Bible reading with song and prayer at home on a Sunday afternoon alone, or, better still, with friends and kindred, and still better if there are children to be enlisted, will be a service of home dedication and a sacred feast where the blessings of the kingdom of heaven shall be enjoyed.

Dr. W. A. Duncan, of Syracuse, N. Y., an efficient educator, a Congregational layman, Sunday-school secretary for his church, and our valued associate in Chautauqua work, has recently developed this home school idea in several articles, tracts and addresses. We join hands with our beloved Congregational brother in this new endeavor after more systematic work by the family and by the neighborhood in the teaching and study of God's Word.¹

The best fruits of this domestic service will be gathered by the family as such. We are not reverent and religious enough as families. The responsibility of parents for home instruction is in danger of being transferred to outside and public institutions. "Workers" with limp-covered Bibles who go to conventions and talk in meetings do good in their way. Some of them are very useful. But they cannot do mother's work and father's work. And we don't want them to attempt it, until we have exhausted every effort to induce father and mother to discharge their own duties. Home has its own legitimate line of labor. Nowhere else can we expect that labor to be efficiently performed. Only when it is neglected is there any justification for its attempted charge by others. This home Sunday-school idea will tend to put into the hearts of parents a sense of their responsibility to give their hands practice and deftness in doing the duty God required from them.

Let us commend the home school as a plan to be made

¹ Here follows the quotation in full of Leaflet No. 6.

effective. Test it! Test it at once! Begin at your home — whether you, the reader of these lines, be superintendent, teacher, or pupil. Look up neglected children or those who for any reason do not go to Sunday-school. Find a place — somebody's kitchen or parlor. Appoint a meeting. Get lesson and other papers. Begin!

Whom does the Home Department aim to reach? It seeks to carry the privilege of Bible study to: —

I. **Individuals.** — There are many who do not wish to join in the study of the Scriptures. The very thought is irksome to them. They do not go to the Sunday-school because they do not enjoy going. The Home Department can reach them only rarely. But there are many who are not indifferent to the value of Bible study, who by force of circumstances cannot join in it with those who are in the Sunday-school. They may be divided into two classes: —

(1) *The Shut-ins.* The number of these is larger than one would think. There are the aged and infirm. It is pitiful to think how much they are left to themselves. In many a home they simply occupy a corner. They are made to feel that their days of usefulness are entirely gone by. It is hard so to be left out of everything. An invitation to them to become members of a Home Class, which is only a portion of a Home Department belonging to a certain Sunday-school, will in the most of cases indeed be welcome. They will be rejoiced to know that they still can be associated with others and have a place with them. This knowledge will do much to dissipate their loneliness and increase their self-respect. Already it has brought joy and comfort to many.

Of course among the shut-ins are to be included the invalids, both recovering and incurable. Time goes slowly by to the sick. The tendency with them is to morbid dwelling upon their disease. They should be given something to do, not beyond their powers, which is cheerful and stimulating, and which will take them out of themselves. What can be done better for them than to give them a Sunday-school lesson to master? A little work each day upon the lesson, as strength will permit, and the leaden-footed moments will take on wings. And when the lesson quarterly is put aside there will be something to think upon — something which will lift the thoughts up towards heaven and which will make either living or dying more sweet. If one recovers, it will be to greater usefulness; and if one dies, those lessons will illuminate the valley of the shadow of death.

Then there are the mothers who are kept at home by their little children and their household duties. Their never-ending round of tasks becomes almost unbearable drudgery unless the heart and the mind are stimulated. For them the time taken for Bible study is an absolute gain. They will be the fresher and the stronger for it. When the heart is cheered, duties become light. Christ knew what he was saying when he invited the weary and the heavy laden to come unto him that they might find rest. By all means the mothers should become members of the Home Department that they may find new strength and cheer in Bible study. And then, too, they will be better mothers for so doing — kinder, more patient, more loving, wiser. For the sake of the children and the whole household they should be disciples of Christ.

Let not the servants be forgotten. The Sunday dinner must be prepared so that it may be ready for those coming home from church and Sunday-school. There is usually no opportunity for the servants to attend the Sabbath-school. Should they be shut out from all its privileges? The Home Department offers to them the opportunity of studying the Sunday-school lessons at such odd moments in the week as they can command, and counting that study just as though they were present in the school. Thus the parlor and the kitchen may be associated together, and each be the better for the fact.

(2) *The Shut-outs.* Here is another large class. The shut-ins are those who are unable to leave home to attend the Sunday-school; the shut-outs are those who are kept out because of their occupations. A simple enumeration of some of them is sufficient. There are the commercial travelers, the railroad conductors, brakemen, engineers, newsboys, railway postal clerks, telegraph operators, hotel clerks, drug clerks, steamer officers and employees, army officers and soldiers, civil engineers and their assistants, boatmen, etc. etc. Many of these spend their Sundays in different places. They could not attend any one Sunday-school, even if they were inclined to do so. But by the arrangements made by the Home Department any one can be still connected with one special school, no matter where he may be, and be credited with his study of the lesson as though appearing with the rest. Whether he is on the rail or the ocean or in camp he can take out his Quarterly and soon put himself into sympathetic connection with those at home. Those lessons while on the wing will do much to steady

the wanderer and to turn aside the temptations which especially beset him.

To the above a third class might be added — *the transients*. They are those who are merely stopping for a while in a place, like students in academies and colleges and the boarders in the cities. Their homes are elsewhere. While they are away from them they are apt to drop many of the good old habits which they would have kept up had they not come away. They attend church irregularly and Sunday-school not at all. It is the business of the Home Department to look them up and reestablish the old customs.

II. **The home.** — Some families are situated so far from church and Sunday-school that they cannot attend either service, or more than one. Others are in small communities where there are no church or Sunday-school privileges, or live in localities where they are isolated from all the benefits of society. To such families the Home Department is an inestimable boon. It brings them into connection with thousands of others. They feel the impulse of the spiritual life which throbs in the church and Sunday-school. This mental and moral stimulus is just what they need. It is like bringing into the home a telegraph wire which connects it with the great world without, though it may be upon some lonely mountain top or in some unfrequented vale.

Again, in some places the snow is so deep during the winter and the cold so intense, that the Sunday-school has to be given up for the time. In all these cases the Home Department offers associated home study in the place of study in the Sunday-school. Each family becomes a Home Class, stimulated in its efforts by the

knowledge that there are many other classes like it, each one making its quarterly report to the superintendent of the Home Department with which it is connected, and receiving in turn information as to the progress made by the Department as a whole, and when the Sunday-school is in session, getting reports from the main school. When the Sunday-school is forced by the inclemency of the weather to suspend, the Home Department practically keeps it going without dropping a lesson, so that in resuming not a Sunday has been really lost. That is much better than to have an intermission for three months, during which the thoughts have not been turned towards the Scriptures at all. In the one case it takes considerable time to get things going; in the other the steam is all up and the train moves right off.

So, too, in the summer when a family goes off on a vacation, instead of dropping out of the Sunday-school altogether, its members can for the time being join the Home Department, and thus keep in touch with their own home school, taking up their relationship to the main department again upon their return.

Whether the whole family join in making a Home Class or only one member of it unite with others outside to make one, the study of the Bible is introduced into the home. If there be only a single one of the household engaged in the systematic study of the Bible in connection with the Sunday-school, that is of itself no small gain. The knowledge of the fact and the sight of that regular effort at mastering the weekly Sunday-school lesson cannot fail of having a beneficial effect upon the rest of the household. Much can be hoped for where a pledge has been secured from but one to study the

lesson. It may — in some cases it surely will — lead to the study of the same lesson by others in the home, to the conversion of one or more or all, and to the setting up of the family altar. And thus the Home Department will in many instances make over the home.

III. **The town.** — The term is used with relation, not to a village, but to the district which is so called. In early times in New England the parish of the church was coextensive with the town. Indeed the town meeting was also the parish meeting, for it was summoned to elect a deacon or call a minister or build a meeting-house, as well as to elect a member of the General Court or build a bridge or assess a tax. In those days the parish was thoroughly looked after with relation both to civil and ecclesiastical matters. With the breaking up of this relationship of the church to the town, the parish of a church has become so indefinite that now it practically means all that territory which it holds and looks after. The presence of a number of churches in a town so distributes the responsibility that it rests but lightly upon each one, and frequently the duty of oversight is neglected by all. In some country towns in the older states the churches have one by one died out, leaving no church organization or Sunday-school to look after the spiritual concerns of the community. That fact is a serious one, and one of the grave problems which has to be solved is as to what shall be done for the country towns where such a state of things exists.

In both of the cases suggested the Home Department may be a most useful organization. Where there are a number of churches which have not been fully looking after the field in which they are placed, a joint canvass

by them under the Home Department plan will not only let them know what are the facts relative to the town, and gather into them those who need only a little urging to come in, but will systematically follow it up, so that each church shall know once every three months through its Home Department visitors what families have come in or gone out or should be especially seen by the pastor. A corps of such visitors going over the field once every quarter may be of incalculable assistance to the pastor and of advantage to the church. Where all the churches have died out, if a Sunday-school cannot be established, the Home Department can connect the families with the churches in the next live parish, and so not leave them entirely without the quickening influence of the Word.

II. ILLUSTRATED.

I. **The aged.** — At Gilsum, N. H., two aged women in feeble health, members of the church, but who never again expected to cross its threshold, were more than glad to become members of the Home Department. It brought them, the visitor says, in touch with the Sunday-school once more, and they felt that they were having a part in its work from Sunday to Sunday. "It is a new link to bind them to the church they love so well." One of them was a pupil in what is believed to have been the first Sunday-school established in the state of New Hampshire.

The Congregational Sunday-school of Franklin, Delaware County, N. Y., in organizing its Home Department induced nine persons over seventy years of age to join.

In canvassing for a Home Department in connection with the Prospect Street Congregational Sunday-school of Newburyport, Mass., an old lady ninety-seven years of age was found who gladly enrolled herself in a Home Class, saying, "I've wanted to join some such thing for a long while, so as to study the Bible with those who are in the Sunday-school, but I did n't think you would get around to it in my day."

At North Brookfield, Mass., on Children's Day, when the roll of the Home Department was called, among the hundred responding was one man ninety-six years of age.

In Binghamton, N. Y., an old lady belongs to a Home Class, who is but just able to get around her room by pushing a wheeled chair. To her the privilege of studying the lesson in connection with the Sunday-school has been greatly prized. When the visitor came, bringing a new Quarterly, she said: "Why, you're a long time coming! I studied my book through in a month, and it's such a comfort to me! Seems as if I was somebody again!" When told that her Quarterly was for three months, she disappointedly replied: "Oh, is it? I wanted you to come oftener."

II. Invalids. — In establishing a Home Department in a town in New Hampshire the first one invited to join was a lady in poor health. She rejoiced at the opportunity thus afforded her, saying that her husband would study with her, and adding, "You don't know how I feel when I hear the bell ring on Sunday morning; I want so much to go to church."

In Otsego County, N. Y., an invalid was enrolled in a Home Class of five. Recovering, her first call was upon

the Visitor who induced her to join ; and to her she said : " I thank you for helping me to study God's Word. I have found Christ, and I want to join the church."

On joining the Home Department said one who had been a " shut-in " for ten years : " It seems good to feel that I belong with Christians and am doing something in common with them."

A member of the Home Department connected with Dr. E. N. Packard's church, Syracuse, N. Y., while on a dying bed, said : " Tell my pastor that my home study record is full up to date."

III. **The isolated.** — Mr. A. Jardine, of Winnipeg, Manitoba, has found the Home Department an admirable substitute for the Sunday-school during the winter. The temperature at times there touches forty-six degrees below zero, rendering it unsafe for the children to be out. For the time they are practically isolated. So, too, are those who live too far away to attend the school even in more moderate weather. Among all these Mr. Jardine has sought to keep up interest in the study of the lesson by means of Home Classes. His scholars are all ready in the spring to begin Sunday-school at the high water mark.

Connected with the Sunday-school at Pullman, Wash., is a Home Department which at last accounts was reaching twenty-five persons, seven of whom were not near enough to attend the school or church, and twelve of whom were in the mountain camps, ninety miles away. It takes some correspondence to sustain such a Department, but how welcome it must be to those lonely miners !

The Home Department of the First Baptist Sunday-school of Elmira, N. Y., has in it three members who are totally blind, three families living on the plains in Montana, and one neighborhood Home Class composed of those who live a great distance from church, and who meet at the house of one of their number, who acts as leader.

In a township in New York State, where there is no Sunday-school, a lady who is crippled with rheumatism and who has been a "shut-in" for years is a member of a Home Department of a Sunday-school forty miles away.

A Home Department in Connecticut has in its membership eight persons who have removed to Utah. In this way the old ties and the old religious influences are kept alive.

A farmer's wife, living eight miles from New Milford, Conn., heard of the Home Department, and concluded to start one. She lives four miles from church in a sparsely settled community. Though busy with many cares, she enlisted thirteen, three of whom are in Colorado. From the Colorado contingent has grown a Sunday-school fully equipped and officered. Recently she invited the local members to spend the evening at her house. Ten responded, and the time passed delightfully in talking over the lessons and in the good fellowship called out by association in study.

IV. **Mothers.**— Now and then letters have been received from mothers which show their interest in this movement. One of the last was from a widow with eight children. She wants not only to study the lessons with her own children, but proposes to organize a Home Class to consist of mothers, invalids, and children quarantined

on account of sickness. What a blessing she has it in her heart to be !

V. **Pastors.**—How the Home Department may help pastors is illustrated by two incidents in Connecticut. A lady past middle age, not a professor of religion, joined a Home Department. Meeting her with her Quarterly in her hand, the pastor found it very easy to approach her on the subject of religion through her Bible study. In the other case a woman had been with difficulty persuaded to join the Home Department, but became interested in the study of the Scriptures after she had done so. Formerly she had repelled all the efforts of her pastor to talk with her on the subject of personal religion. Noting that her reports of home study were good, the pastor commended her for them. Calling upon her after a few months, he found her entirely accessible to conversation and she was glad to have him pray with her.

One man, who had been alienated from the church, after joining the Home Department came back with his family, and now appears with them regularly in the old family pew.

Before his death Rev. R. D. Metcalf had a Home Department in New York State nine miles wide by fifteen long ! In two others established by him he had three hundred students enrolled. One result of a Home Department organized by him while pastor at East Fairfield, Vt., was the beginning of a Sunday-school at East Fletcher, which was started as a branch of the school at Bakersfield. It gathered about fifty at its first session, only three of those present of school age ever having been members of a Sunday-school before. See the chapter on the Home Department and the Pastor.

VI. **The parish.** — The superintendent of a Sunday-school in Vermont writes that in his Home Department there are thirty-six families, only ten of which ever come to church and twenty-six of which have in all forty-six children that would be without Sunday-school privileges except for this method of reaching them. Some of the families live five miles away from the school. He says : " I never saw anything like the Home Department for reaching every nook and corner of the parish."

When the Home Department plan was adopted by the churches at Prattsburg, N. Y., it was pushed by them coöperatively. The place is a village of only six hundred inhabitants, and has three churches with a membership of less than four hundred. A force of forty-five visitors was put into the field, each one reporting to his own Sunday-school superintendent, but each superintendent notifying the other superintendents of families preferring a different denominational connection than his own. As the result of the canvass, 201 joined Home Classes, distributed as follows : Presbyterians 90 ; Methodists 71 ; Baptists 40. Here was one canvass instead of three, and the impression made by the comity exhibited must have been far better than would have been the case had each church visited the whole parish solely in its own interests.

Writing of the Home Department, Rev. W. R. Sutherland, of Rosssburn, Manitoba, Can., says : —

We as missionaries cannot do our work in scattered districts without it. Our presbytery includes a large district of thinly-settled country. The great majority of our people live in the country. We have Sunday-schools along the railroad the year round, but in all this district there were not

more than eight or ten schools last winter, while fully one half the people beyond the railroad have no Sunday-school in summer. Take summer and winter together and it equals half the people beyond the reach of Sunday-schools in this presbytery. Our towns are small and the country large. Now the Home Department is so plastic that it adapts itself with equal ease and simplicity to the wants of scattered districts, where you can have no school at all as a center of operation, as it does to the cities. For example, we send a missionary to a scattered mission field, where no Sunday-school can be efficiently maintained, and he can in twelve months' time have as large a percentage of the people studying the Sunday-school lesson at home as in the average town or village. I had eighty in one field, some of them six miles from the nearest family. By means of this grand scheme we can have our whole scattered mission field one Sunday-school and all bound together with the school spirit.

7. Membership. — The Sunday-school at Caledonia, N. D., had for membership but one man and a few women, and yet it organized three other Sunday-schools in its vicinity. It also started a Home Department through a stage driver, who offered to deliver the lesson helps and papers to any along his route who would join. From that Home Department grew a Sunday-school.

The Home Departments of the Carrington and Melville schools, N. D., proved also to be prolific seed. After being carried on by them for two or three years, little Sunday-schools were organized out of them, which set up for themselves — a strawberry way of propagation.

The Presbyterian Sunday-school of Lebanon, Ind., without going outside of the families already connected with its school and congregation, enrolled over a hundred members.

The Home Department of the school at Hyde Park, Mass., Rev. Andrew W. Archibald, pastor, numbers about 250, and has thirteen visitors. The pastor testifies that this Department is of great value to him in his work of visitation, and that it has had a marked effect in securing better study in the school by bringing the home into coöperation with the teachers. It also has added to the membership of the main department.

At the present writing Connecticut is reported to have 209 Home Departments with a total membership of nearly 6,000. W. H. Hall, Secretary of the Connecticut State Sunday-school Association, says in his last report: "The Home Department has demonstrated in Connecticut its power to reach and influence in favor of Bible study people of all classes and conditions, many of whom are not approachable in any other way. Its adaptability to varying and prevalent conditions is universally acknowledged. It invariably tends to the upbuilding of the Sunday-school in membership, in interest, and in power."

A Yale theological student, just after his graduation, was called to one of the old hill towns in New England. He found that there were ninety-six persons in the Sunday-school. Organizing a Home Department, one year afterwards the statistics of the school were as follows: — In the main school, 116; in the Home Department, 136 — total, 252.

A Home Department in Pennsylvania, in the city of Reading, numbering over two hundred, had among its membership ladies, business and professional men, an army officer, and a member of Congress.

Tioga County, New York, with no large cities in it,

has twenty-seven Home Departments, with a total membership of 976. Broome County, N. Y., has twenty-five Home Departments with 967 members, eight of which are in Binghamton. Five of the eight churches of Cortland, N. Y., canvassed the village, securing 250 for their Home Departments. The three Sunday-schools of McGrawville, a village in Cortland County, united in canvassing their territory, and in ten days' time obtained 87 members for their Home Departments.

The superintendent of the Home Department connected with the South Church, New Britain, Conn., writes: "When the work was undertaken (about four years ago), it was thought by many that it was not only an unnecessary work, but that it would interfere with the main school, and draw from our numbers. Instead of that the result has been to increase the membership of the school. The inevitable result of awakening interest in Bible study at home seems to be to bring to Sunday-school all who can come. Of 337, who up to this date have joined the Home Department, we have at present about 270 members. Nearly thirty have come into the Sunday-school, ten have died, quite a number have left town, and a few have dropped out.

"Among our members are many elderly people and invalids, also mothers with young children, who though unable to attend the main school are glad to be connected with it. We have also many foreigners, parents of children in our school, who seldom enter a church themselves, and who are practically without the gospel. Some of them cannot read English, but are pleased with a Quarterly in their own language. We provide forty German and Swedish Quarterlies. We also send an

envelope to each member with the Quarterly and report card, but with the distinct understanding that all contributions are voluntary. Last year the offerings amounted to \$115, and after paying all expenses we had \$70 for missionary work."

8. **Results.** In Binghamton, N. Y., the visitors in canvassing for the Home Department found a man so given over to drink, that, losing all hope of regaining his manhood, he had attempted suicide. While confined to his bed from the injuries which he had inflicted upon himself, they induced him to join the Home Department. His study of the Bible led to his conversion, to his victory over his depraved appetite, and to his joining a Methodist church in that city.

In the same city a backslider who had not attended any church for years became a member of a Home Class, and soon afterwards resumed his attendance upon the services of the church. When dying he expressed a good hope in Christ, and attributing his salvation to that agency, exclaimed: "God bless the man who first thought of the Home Class!"

In Chenango County, N. Y., the Home Department was introduced into a small Baptist Sunday-school. The pastor, in testifying to its remarkable success, spoke particularly of one case. He said that a man who refused to go to church and who had openly scoffed at religion was induced to join the Home Department, and that as a consequence he had become a regular attendant upon the church services and that he had transferred his membership from the Home Department to the pastor's Bible class.

In New Hampshire a business man, when asked to

join a Home Class, said : " I suppose you hope that we will go into the Sunday-school by and by—and we ought to." Another, hearing the matter mentioned from the pulpit brought three names besides his own, saying, " I thought that I would like to be in such a class."

In Syracuse, N. Y., in connection with Good Will Sunday-school a Home Class was formed in a family where the father was a drinking man and in the habit of beating his wife. He would not allow the children to attend any Sunday-school, but would permit a teacher to come into his own home and instruct them. That teacher said that one Sunday the mother came out of the bedroom with her face covered with blood from the brutal blows inflicted by her husband. The Home Class was the first reformatory agency to obtain an admission to that home.

In a letter from Dora, Minn., the writer says : " We think that the Home Department work has resulted indirectly in at least two conversions, and as we are commencing a new work a few miles south of here, we think it advisable to introduce the Home Department there, with a view to creating an interest in, and a final organization of, a Sunday-school in that place." The Home Department in many instances has proved to be an effective pioneer for the Sunday-school.

In the Washington Street Sunday-school, Toledo, Ohio, Marion Lawrance superintendent, there is a Home Department which has members in eight different states. The fact that after one moves away into another state he keeps up his connection with it shows how strong a hold the Home Department has.

A young woman absent from home at work induced

her father's family to join the Home Department. Four other families in the neighborhood soon united in the study, none of which had been in the habit of attending any religious service. Within a year the parents in these families united with the nearest church.

The superintendent of the Home Department at Richford, N. Y., writes that in an out district, far from any church or Sunday-school, where her assistant at first feared to approach any one with the suggestion of joining the Home Department, the people have become so interested as to meet in little neighborhood classes, meeting in the different schoolhouses for the purpose of studying the lesson. The pastor adds that in one of these neighborhoods there are only two professing Christians, and that one of the roughest men in the town, a man of about sixty-five, lives there. Though the latter is still rough, he has much improved, having become interested in Bible study, and having changed from favoring license to opposing it. His influence has been quite a factor in making the town go no-license.

The foregoing are merely sample illustrations out of thousands of similar incidents. They are not selected, but are taken as they come to hand. Probably many who read them can more than match them with others in their own experience.

III.

THE ORGANIZATION OF THE HOME DEPARTMENT.¹

THE definition of the purpose of the Home Department has been given. The definition of the Home Department itself is as follows : —

The Home Department is that agency or department of the Sunday-school whose object is to promote the study of the Bible, in connection with the Sunday-school, among those who for any reason do not attend its sessions.

That which has been said relative to the purpose of the Home Department renders it needless here to refer to anything more than its relations to the main school. Of that it is a department, as close in its connection as the Senior, the Intermediate, or the Primary Departments. If it be the custom, as is the case in many of the larger schools, to constitute an Executive Committee of the heads of the different departments, then the superintendent of the Home Department should have a

¹ It should be understood that in what is here said about organization and subsequently about methods the author follows almost literally the divisions of the address delivered by Dr. Duncan in St. Louis before the World's Sunday-school Convention and the outline of the Normal Class Leaflet No. 4, prepared with great care by him. The writer has desired to present the Home Class work from the standpoint of the author of the Home Class, and therefore has followed him strictly in all but the filling up.

place upon that Executive Committee. The officers of the Home Department should be regarded as officers of the school; its visitors should rank along with the teachers, and its members should be counted in with the rest of the school — even when reporting to the denominational or interdenominational headquarters for the gathering of statistics. The study of the lesson by the members of the Home Department should be looked upon as the equivalent of personal attendance upon the school, and their contributions should go into the common treasury. The students in the Home Classes should be welcomed into classes of like grade. They should be entitled to the use of the library and to participation in all the Sunday-school socials, picnics, entertainments, lectures, etc. The Home Department never should be referred to as an outside organization, having only a nominal connection with the church or school.

Being a department of the Sunday-school it should make its quarterly and annual reports, and in turn be made acquainted with the facts concerning the school as a whole. The interest of the members of the Home Department will be greatly increased by the closeness of this fellowship. They will come to take a personal concern in the growth or decrease of the Sunday-school, and will in many instances be led to join the main school. Many schools either print a quarterly report, or reproduce it by one of the duplicating processes, and send it to every member of the Home Department. Too much stress cannot be laid upon making the members of the Home Department feel that they are a part of the school, as essential as any other part. The more cordial and complete that recognition is, the better will the Home

Department be able to accomplish its mission. The main school should be like a magnet, drawing every member of the Home Department towards itself and holding them all to one center by means of its powerful influence.

Again, being a department merely, it should be subject to all the rules and regulations of the school which are applicable to it. Its officers and workers should be appointed according to the rules or custom of the school, and they should act under the direction and in coöperation with its executive. They should consider that they are working in the interests of the school as a whole and not merely for their department alone. Hence their thought should be, not to make the Home Department as large as possible, but to make it contribute to the growth and interest of the main school. Some primary departments, in order to keep a greater showing, unwisely retain pupils who should go into the intermediate department. The Home Department may do its very best work by entirely obliterating itself, as was the case with one started in Manitoba, every one of its members having joined the main school. Whenever one of a Home Class transfers his connection to the school there is cause for rejoicing, for that fact is evidence that the Home Department has awakened in him such a love of Bible study that he wishes the additional aid of personal teaching and class discussion. The value of the Home Department is not to be gathered from its numbers, but by what it does for those connected with it and for the school.

How shall the Home Department be organized? It should have: — 1. A superintendent. 2. A secretary

and treasurer, when large enough to need one. 3. Visitors. 4. Home Classes.

Let us take up these in their order :—

I. The Superintendent.—**1. His appointment.** Reference already has been made to the fact that this officer should be chosen according to the rules or custom of the school. If installation is practiced with regard to the heads of the other departments, or if any special rites are observed upon their appointment, or any public notice is taken of it, then a like recognition of the importance of the office should be accorded to his entering upon its responsibilities. Incidentally it may be said that some form of induction into office which fitly emphasizes the greatness of the obligation imposed by it would be advisable in the case of any Sunday-school functionary. Responsibilities easily and lightly assumed are quite likely to be carelessly discharged and easily dropped.

2. His qualifications. We hardly need say that much depends upon the qualifications of the superintendent. Under the care of one the Home Department will fail, while with another at its head it will be a great success. Great pains, therefore, should be taken in the selection of the one to whom it is to be entrusted. The limitation of the English language is such that we have to speak as if the superintendent must be a man—but a woman may hold the office. In many instances it has been found better to place a woman in charge of the work. Get the best one for the place to be found without regard to sex. Whether the superintendent be one or the other, certain endowments are necessary in order to achieve success. They are :—

(1) *Consecration to the service of Christ.* The superintendent should not be a reluctant but a zealous worker. He should feel that the Master has called him to work — to minister rather than to be ministered unto. He should be inspired with a love for souls and a great desire to see them ingathered into the kingdom. He should be so enthusiastic that others will take fire from his flame. If the work be undertaken as an onerous duty, rather than as a great opportunity for service, the achievements will be comparatively small. An engine will move in proportion to the steam generating in the boiler. We work hard to accomplish those things in which our hearts are engaged, and as much as possible slight those in which we have but little interest. To secure faithful and thorough work in the Home Department, therefore, the superintendent should be one of those who reply to the Lord's call: "Here am I; send me."

(2) *Faith in the Home Department as an effective agency.* The one who thoroughly believes in a thing will make it accomplish a great deal when others can achieve little or nothing with it. One's efforts will be increased according to his faith. A happy, cheerful confidence as to results will make things go. It will stimulate all the under-workers. It will commend the plan to whomsoever it may be suggested; for one of the first things necessary to make others believe in anything is to believe in it strongly one's self. It is said of Jesus' second visit to Nazareth: "And he did not many mighty works there because of their unbelief" (Matt. 13: 58). If anywhere the Home Department should fail to accomplish many mighty works, it would probably be for a like reason.

How shall faith be obtained? By considering the purpose and the plan of the Home Department. Observe how adapted it is to enlist people in the study of the Scriptures. By ascertaining what it has accomplished in other places. It is no longer an experiment, but has been proved to be a powerful agency for evangelization. By personal experience. Go into the field determined to demonstrate its full efficiency, and faith will develop with each proof of its adaptation to its end.

(3) *Executive ability.* That means simply the power to carry a plan into execution. The one who has it sees quickly how to adapt the means which he has to accomplish his object, or how to get the means in case he has n't them. He is full of resources. If one method fails, he has another which is better. Many address themselves to their task without considering how best to do it; he considers, thinks, compares, plans. In the phrase of the day, he "gets there." It is such a one who should be chosen to be the superintendent of the Home Department.

(4) *Tact.* Tact means touch, and in the sense here used, it is the ability to *touch* people in the right way. Its meaning is illustrated by the prayer of the little girl who petitioned God "to help her rub kitty in the way that makes her purr and not the way that makes her scratch." Some people are always rubbing the fur in the wrong way. The disposition is aroused to say No to their request even before its nature is fully apprehended. Just the contrary is the case with regard to the approach of others. The desire to oblige them is such that an assent is given to every reasonable demand even before it is fully stated. One with tact will easily accomplish that

which others will not be able to do at all or do only with the hardest of effort. Do not put a tactless person in as superintendent of the Home Department.

(5) *Persistence.* A great many things are abandoned just at that point where a little more effort would make them go. Nearly every undertaking has its period of difficulty at the beginning, which must be surmounted. Let it not be thought by any one that a successful Home Department can be organized and carried on from the very start without any discouragements. The visitors may meet with refusal after refusal. It may seem at the outset impossible to establish even a single Home Class. There are those who have met with this experience, and yet by persevering have seen a splendid result crown their labors. Be pleased if even only a few are secured ; don't be satisfied, but be glad. In time, and by continued effort, the few will become many. The superintendent who persists, who will not entertain for a moment the thought of defeat, will in the end find himself the head of a Home Department of which he will have no occasion to be ashamed.

3. **His duties.** Before undertaking any work one should ascertain exactly what is required in order to accomplish it. A clear understanding of the duties involved in the position of superintendent of the Home Department will of itself be a preparation for the office. Those duties are :—

(1) *To map out and thoroughly know the field.* The first thing to discover is the extent of the territory to be canvassed. Some of it may be thickly and some of it may be thinly settled. That fact must be taken into consideration in districting the field. Some of it will be

found to be easy of access and some of it difficult ; some of it may be respectable and some of it may have a hostile population with some "toughs" in it ; some may be where the people of the church reside and some of it may be where there are few church-goers, etc. All these things must be taken into account in estimating the number of visitors required, and in assigning them to their several fields, for it must be evident that a visitor who is perfectly adapted to one district may not be at all fitted to go into another. The leader of a band of visitors must be thoroughly acquainted with each portion of the territory to be covered by them. He is a poor general who does not look over the battlefield beforehand, if there is the least opportunity to do so. The superintendent should be able to tell each visitor concerning her field, the best way of getting to it, the character of its inhabitants, the course to pursue in approaching the people, etc.

(2) *To select a corps of visitors.* Having mapped out his territory and divided it into districts, the superintendent then, with an eye to its several fields, should look over the church membership and select those whom he deems to be best adapted to the work. These should be nominated by him to the school or to the executive committee, or to the church, as may be the rule or the custom, and elected to their positions in the usual way. The better the material in the visitors the surer will be their welcome. It is a mistake to send out the uninfluential and the uninfluencing. The work should not be felt by any one to be beneath her. When any one so feels, she is not worthy of it. Nominate the best women in the church, and leave it to them to say whether they

will not or can not act. The higher the standing of the visitors in the church and socially, the more likely will they succeed in getting members of the best families to join the Home Department; and if *they* join, that fact will be a powerful inducement for others to follow. Women are suggested for visitors rather than men because they are likely to be able to command more time, are more zealous, have more tact, and are more welcome in the homes to be visited.

(3) *To instruct the visitors and to assign to them their work.* Even the most intelligent and quick-witted are helped by a little instruction. Mr. Moody has found it advisable to have a school for Christian workers, that they may be fitted for just this kind of effort—that of approaching people in their homes. Having secured his corps of visitors, the superintendent should meet with them and clearly outline their duties, explaining the purpose and the plan of the Home Department, indicating the methods to be followed and assigning each to her field. At this first meeting it is important that the visitors be inspired with enthusiasm for their work, and that they be made to feel that it is not taken up to be followed only for a little while. Very much will depend upon the spirit and the purpose with which the visitors enter upon their labors. Better that some fields should remain for a while unvisited than to send into them those who will merely make it harder for others to succeed.

The superintendent should have a meeting with his visitors at least once every quarter for comparing notes, learning methods from each other, the relation of experiences, and for prayer. Such meetings will be of great

value to the visitors, and they will go out from them strengthened and made wiser for their work.

(4) *To keep accurate records.* In the Home Department, bookkeeping is as necessary as in a business house. Success in any enterprise comes from looking after details. The books should show every accession to the department and every loss; they should contain the names of all the visitors and of the members of the Home Classes; they should indicate every transference from the Home Department to the main school, every removal of any member of a Home Class and to what locality, every result accomplished by his membership. In other words, the object of the bookkeeping is not to make a show of statistics merely, but to keep track of each Home Class member so that he shall not be lost. From the records thus kept the superintendent will make quarterly and annual reports to the main school, that every one in the school may take an interest in the Home Department and feel that it is part of the school. He will also make similar reports to each member of the Home Classes, that each one may see what are the facts relative to the Home Department, and so the tie to it be made the stronger. In that report he will add the statistics of the main school that the force of connection with it may be felt.

(5) *To plan and direct social, instructive, and religious gatherings for the members of the Home Department.* An *esprit de corps* may be developed and stimulated by such meetings which will tend to make the department very popular, and in that way aid its further increase. At the first social the pastor might give an informal talk on Bible study, emphasizing its importance and expressing

his hearty sympathy with the new organization. For subsequent gatherings speakers should be secured to give an insight into the books being studied, and to give an idea of the times in which and the purpose for which they were written, or to speak upon some themes which have come up in class study. Neighborhood prayer-meetings can be instituted among the members of the Home Department, and occasionally a meeting be held to which all shall be invited to be addressed by the pastor or some effective speaker.

II. Visitors.—As already indicated the visitors usually should be ladies. In Home Department work they succeed better than men. By nature they are better fitted for it. Many church members who feel that they have no gift for teaching in the Sunday-school will find that they can do this work well. Of course it is better to take those not already employed in some church service, that the working power of the church may be developed. In some cases the Y. P. S. C. E. has furnished a band of zealous young people for the purpose, but as a rule more will be accomplished by the more mature and experienced.

1. Their qualifications. Like the superintendent they need Christian zeal for their work. They should prosecute it with relish. They should be fully persuaded in their own minds that it is right, necessary, and efficacious. They should have full confidence in the Home Department as an agency for accomplishing its purpose. They should be persons of high Christian character, so that they will be respected wherever they go. They should have courage and tactful persistence in their work. With these qualifications they will have

no trouble in establishing a Home Department of great value.

2. Their duties. (1) *To organize Home Classes.* This is to be done by a thorough canvassing of the neighborhood entrusted to each. Each family is to be visited, its religious statistics gathered, and so far as possible all of its members pledged to enter the Home Department, who can not or will not attend the sessions of the Sunday-school. The first effort should be directed towards inducing those to join the main school who are able to do so. The Visitor should consider that it is a greater gain to influence one to connect himself with the main school than with the Home Department, for then he is brought into touch with a teacher, is quickened by the thoughts suggested in the class, and feels the impulse of the school. Of course the Visitor will not neglect the opportunity which her visit affords to give a cordial invitation to attend the services of the church, though care must be taken not to proselyte from other churches. If any family prefers a church and Sunday-school of a different denomination, true Christian comity will suggest that the pastor and superintendent concerned shall be notified of the fact. It is sufficient to secure a simple oral promise that one will study the Sunday-school lesson at least a half hour each week. The written pledge has been almost abandoned, it having been found in practical work unnecessary. If one says that he will study the lesson, and takes the Quarterly and the report collection envelope, that is all the proof that is needed of his intention to study as desired. For the various forms which a Home Class may take, see **Classes.**

(2) *To visit the members of the Home Classes*

regularly. The enrolment of members should be followed by regular visitation to provide them at the end of the quarter with new lesson helps, report collection envelopes or report cards and collection envelopes, and to receive their offerings. These calls should be made immediately after the last Sunday of the quarter, so that there will be ample time to study the lesson for the next Sunday by those who may wish to take it up during the week. Other visits should be made as occasion may require, such as sickness, affliction, report of intended removal, etc.

Much will depend upon the character of these visits. If they are merely perfunctory calls, they will result in but little ; but if they are permeated with a spirit of true and helpful friendliness, they may accomplish a great deal. Two errors should be avoided. The first is the assumption of the official missionary I-am-come-to-do-you-good air, and the other is the manifestation of insincere gush. Be neither formal nor too demonstrative. Be content to make headway slowly, but hold all that is gained. Bear in mind the fact that the enrolment is only the means to an end, and that that end is the conversion and discipleship of each member of the Home Class. But watch for fitting opportunities of conversation on personal religion ; do not be too premature in approaching a topic concerning which people do not talk freely and sincerely except to those who have won their way into their hearts. Begin with such matters as relate to the study of the lessons, and then, as acquaintance justifies, speak of Christ.

If there is an evident indisposition to join the Home Class, do not press the matter to an adverse decision, but

suggest that the circulars be read and the scheme be thoroughly considered, promising to call again. There is hope of success if consent to think over the matter be secured. By the next visit there may be other names added to the list of those pledged which will have a strong influence in favor of an affirmative answer. Many will join if they see that others are joining, and will decline if they think they are to be alone in doing so.

Particularly the Visitor should avoid controversy on religious topics. Do not be entrapped into an argument. Suffer unkind criticism, but do not indulge in any. Do not speak offensively of any pastor, church, or denomination. Make no efforts to proselyte from any other sect. Let the Visitor show that her sole purpose is to promote Bible study and to build up Christ's kingdom.

The Visitor may suggest many things to her Home Class which will be stimulating to its members, and which will bind them together and give her a greater hold upon them. She can make mention of books in the library peculiarly worth reading, give information of approaching socials, picnics, or entertainments, and relate such facts concerning the Sunday-school and the church as will tend to foster interest in them. She can arrange for class reunions, and at those reunions, or during the round of her visits, may induce the members to enter upon some course of reading together. That would be particularly helpful. The reading need not necessarily be of a religious character, but it should have to do only with standard authors. After the course is completed a free and informal meeting, for the purpose of discussing it, would suggest itself, and would prepare the

way for another. The course in each instance should be short. Again the Visitor, after looking up the matter thoroughly, may recommend that the class devote its offerings to some worthy object, such as the establishing of some Sunday-school out upon the frontier, the support of some bed in a hospital, the contribution of a specified amount towards the salary of some missionary, etc. When the proper time comes she may suggest class prayer-meetings, and point out such work for Christ as can be done by its members in their neighborhood, thus making of her class an active evangelizing agency. Thus studying together, reading together, meeting together, giving together, and praying and working together, the members of a Home Class may be cemented in the closest ties of Christian fellowship, and may become a power for good to others.

Visitors also may be of great service in reporting to the superintendent and to the pastor cases of distressing poverty, affliction, need of a little aid in obtaining work, and of especial religious interest. They can let the pastor know of those families which have been neglecting the services of the church, and the reasons therefor; they can inform him of homes where a visit from him would be helpful and welcome. Thus they can enable the minister to put in his spare time to the very best advantage, instead of having to waste a good deal of it in hunting up those whom he can benefit, or going around calling without any particular aim. By noting the circumstances of a family, the Visitor may be able to suggest work which can be done by the mother, or daughter, or son, and so confer an inestimable favor

upon those who are willing to work, but do not know just how to make use of their capabilities.

III. Classes. — The Home Department is made up of Home Classes. A Home Class may consist of only one person ; it should rarely have more than twenty to twenty-five members, though its number should depend upon the time which can be given to it by the Visitor. The average, probably, will not be more than ten to twelve. No Visitor should undertake the oversight of a class so large that she cannot fully take care of it. If classes grow beyond the ability of the Visitors to give them faithful visitation and oversight, new Visitors should be appointed and the overplus be formed into new classes. The members of a Home Class may be of different ages and requiring different grades of Quarterlies. The Visitor must take those who are willing to enlist, no matter how dissimilar they may be. In a Home Class grading is not necessary, inasmuch as in the most of cases individual study is the rule. Home Classes may be divided into : —

1. **Individual Classes.** In these the members study independently of each other. They may live in the same neighborhood or they may be widely scattered. By Individual Classes it is possible to unite in study those who are traveling with those who stay at home ; those who remove to distant places with the Sunday-school which is so beloved by them ; those who are obliged to be on duty with those who are gathered together in the school ; those who are sick or infirm with those who are well and strong. The Home Class will most often take this form.

2. **Family Classes.** It will now and then happen that a family too far removed to attend either church or

Sunday-school, or unable for other reasons to go, such as sickness, want of suitable clothing, etc., will be glad to pursue the study of the Sunday-school lesson together. In that case the father or mother will act as instructor, or both may unite without distinction in the service. Of course the grandparents will be included, if living and present. A Family Class is the most beautiful sight on earth when earnestly and devotionally engaged in the study of God's Word. There is hope for the household where all unite in the study of the Scriptures. Even when a Family Class is not formally organized the Visitor by tactful suggestion may induce the parents to help their children in the mastery of the lesson, thus practically establishing one. The children who go to the Sunday-school need this home help and oversight, and the Visitor may do much to secure them.

3. Neighborhood Classes. In some localities it will be found that some will prefer to meet in the home of one of their number, for the purpose of studying and talking over the lesson together, under the leadership of one whom they may select. Such a class will be a Neighborhood Class. Thousands of such classes are in operation in country neighborhoods which are too remote from church and school to permit of having their privileges. They are the vital religious center of the little communities where they exist, "holding the fort" for the reinforcements which they hope may come in due time, and standing as a bulwark against a relapse into semi-heathenism. It is to be hoped that many Neighborhood Classes will be formed in isolated communities. They can be carried on independently or, what is better in most cases, joined to the nearest affiliated Sunday-school.

4. **Correspondence Classes.** The name suggests their character. With the consent of the Home Department superintendent, any one desiring to do so may start such a class and be its conductor. Think of those who are far separated from all the benefits and good fellowship of church and Sunday-school, and write, asking them if they would not like to become members of a Correspondence Class. Extend the invitation as the circle enlarges through those who are added to it and as new names occur, and it will not be long before a large class will be enrolled, as large as one will care to have the charge of. Quarterlies, of course, should be sent to each member, with the report-collection envelope; and at the end of each quarter the report-collection envelopes should be gathered up and a fresh supply sent. Suggestions as to course reading, benevolent contributions, etc., may be made through correspondence, as in the other classes they are made orally.

Of course a Home Class may unite two or more of these forms.

IV. **Lesson Helps.** — The lesson helps used in the school should be furnished to the members of the Home Classes generally upon the same terms as to the other scholars. Many will prefer to pay for them. Whether they shall be given or not should be left to the discretion of the Visitor. Of course the Visitor should be careful to give to each Home Class student the grade of lesson help most suited to him. Some will be enrolled who are far enough advanced to demand the helps usually placed in the hands of teachers. A lawyer or any professional man would not feel complimented by having a juvenile help offered him.

IV.

THE HOME DEPARTMENT AND THE PASTOR.

It should be understood that the pastor has that official relation to the Home Department which he has, or should have, to every other activity of the church. The superintendent should consult freely with him and act under his advice and direction. The pastor will be profited by the Home Department almost, if not quite, as much as the Sunday-school; and therefore the importance of his being intimately associated with it and acquainted with all that it is doing. If pastors only realized what a help to them the Home Department might be, its general adoption would be phenomenally rapid. Let us note : —

I. How the Home Department can help the Pastor. — It can help him : —

1. In church attendance. The special trouble in each church is to secure visitation and canvass of its field. Once in a while, when the matter is urgently presented, the members of the church are rallied to make the effort. They go from house to house, invite the newcomers to the church and Sunday-school, succeed in getting some who have been neglecting the services of the church, perhaps discover some cases of need, and think that they have done so great a thing that they can rest for a good long while. Such spasmodic going over the territory accomplishes but little. It does not

do very much good either to the church or to the community. A regular, persistent, and thorough canvass is what is required. The Home Department furnishes a corps of visitors, who are pledged to visit every part of the parish at least four times a year, and who may go oftener. This is the very thing which should be done by the church and for the lack of which so many churches are languishing. There are empty pews, and no effort is made to fill them except by the pastor in his preaching. There is no going out in the highway and hedges to compel the people to come in. Each church should evangelize the neighborhood in which it is located, and that cannot be done simply by opening the church on Sunday. The gospel invitation must be carried to the people in their homes. This is done by the visitors of the Home Department. It is one of their duties to urge every one to attend church as well as to join the Sunday-school or the Home Department. Going over the field every quarter, they will be sure to discover the newcomers, and will make them feel that they are welcome both in the church and Sunday-school. By their frequent calls they will be able to overcome the reluctance of many to attend, and will make all feel that the church is indeed in earnest in looking after them. And that is the impression which every church should make.

2. **In visiting.** In every large parish it is a serious problem with every pastor how to make his pastoral work tell to the best advantage. Perfunctory calling is now almost entirely given up, as not being worth the time and pains required. In some cases it is absolutely impossible for the minister to visit each family at stated

intervals. And yet the pastor who is not personally acquainted with his people, and who does not call upon them at all, has but little hold upon them. As a rule, the ministers in large parishes have it understood that they will visit where there is particular need of their services. How shall that need be discovered? In those churches where a missionary is employed the pastor learns from him where he should go ; but in the majority of churches there is no missionary. The corps of Home Department visitors can fulfill all his duties, and that without cost to the church. They can report to the pastor : —

(1) *Those who have letters from other churches.* It too often happens that in coming into a new locality members of other churches do not immediately report the fact that they hold letters of dismission and recommendation. Frequently they are held so long that there is a reluctance to present them. This would not happen at all if there were a corps of visitors regularly canvassing the territory and inquiring into the church relationship of each new arrival.

(2) *Those who are interested in their own salvation.* If the visitors are faithful in their work, such cases will frequently occur. They may find that they need the help of the pastor to secure the needed decision, or that he can remove doubts or make things clear where they are unable to do so. To a pastor it is great comfort and inspiration to be told of such cases. Under such circumstances calling is worth while.

(3) *Those who are in trying circumstances.* The visitors will inform the pastor of any cases of sickness, of affliction, of distress from poverty, or from any other

cause. Before he goes to any house he will so understand the circumstances that he will be prepared to say the right word and do the right thing. He will learn from the Visitors of persons needing work, young or old, and can aid them in securing it.

(4) *Those who can be developed.* The Visitors should always remember that they can be of great service to the church and the pastor by noting what special capabilities there may be in some of the members of their Home Classes. There may be some who would make admirable teachers, and that fact should be reported to the Sunday-school superintendent and to the pastor. They may find some musicians who could be enrolled in an orchestra for the Sunday-school or help in the church choir. They may discover some who would be zealous workers in the Christian Endeavor Society. They will tell the pastor of young persons who are desirous of obtaining a college education or of young men who are beginning to have thoughts of the ministry, and he can strengthen all such aspirations and help them to realize them.

In these and other ways it is evident that the Home Department can do a great deal for the church and the pastor. It is a veritable Pastor's Aid Society. We now look at the other side : —

II. How the Pastor can help the Home Department. — If it is to be a great aid to him, he must be a great aid to it. Its success will largely depend upon his attitude towards it. What can he do for it?

1. **He can introduce it.** He should not wait for the superintendent of the Sunday-school to move in the matter, but should urge its adoption himself. He can

enlist the pastors of the other churches in the work, so that the canvass will be in the interest of all, and thus good understanding and fellowship be promoted. By so doing he will be the means of establishing several Home Departments instead of one. At all events he can be persistent enough to organize a Home Department in connection with his own Sunday-school. Having succeeded in instituting it, —

2. He can commend it. He can recognize it as a worthy department of church work. He can notice it from the pulpit, commending it to all. He can preach upon the value of Bible study, emphasizing the opportunity which the Home Department gives to carry on such study at home in connection with the Sunday-school and by the aid of the excellent helps which are furnished. He can speak of it in his pastoral visits, especially recommending it to business men, to the aged, the infirm, the invalids, the mothers, servants, nurses, etc.

3. He can recognize it. He can recognize it by making mention of it in public prayer, just as he does any other activity of the church. He can preach special sermons to which the members of the Home Department shall be invited. He can send pastoral letters to the members of the Home Department on New Year's day and the like.

4. He can cheer its workers. He can let the Visitors see that he values their work. He can tell them of the good results that come to his notice, of the good words which he hears, of the encouragement which it has been to invalids and others, of the value it is to him in his labors, of the reclamation of backsliders, etc.

5. He can identify himself with it. He can

meet with the superintendent and visitors of the Home Department in their quarterly meetings that he may there learn all that they are doing and make further suggestions to enlarge their work and make it more fruitful. In this conference he will hear many things which will be simply invaluable to him, and will be able to push the work forward to greater usefulness. Not to make use of this effective agency is simply a great blunder.

It has been said that all the foregoing can be done ; they have been done. We are not presenting theories, but facts. Many churches as well as Sunday-schools have felt the stimulus of the Home Department. Many a pastor has discovered that it is an auxiliary which has greatly reinforced him and which he now regards as indispensable. Let us quote from two or three pastors.

Rev. C. E. Mogg, D.D., of Ithaca, N. Y., says : — “ The Department is a means of social and religious visitation. It is an age of personal work. In large churches it is difficult, if not impossible, for the pastor to come into intimate touch with all the members. Additional help is needed. The Home Department will create a large number of assistant pastors.”

Rev. R. E. Burton, of Syracuse, N. Y., says : — “ We believe in it *first, last, and all the time*. Were I now to make a re-statement of the work and its advantages, it would probably be with increased emphasis as to its value. I do not think there is a single department of church work in which results are more *easily, quickly, and largely* realized. If pastors only knew the advantages of such a department, they would at once introduce it into their churches.”

In connection with the "Old Brick Church," Rochester, N. Y., Rev. G. B. F. Hallock has organized a Home Department which numbers over two hundred. Every effort has been made to develop the Home Department and make it efficient. Its members have been made to feel the closeness of the tie which binds them to the Sunday-school and the church. After thorough trial this is the testimony which Mr. Hallock bears concerning the Home Department:—

"We see good results on all sides from the work. For one thing we are sure that the Bible is being studied by many who would otherwise have neglected it, and that it is studied more than it would have been by many who would have studied some. There is inspiration to study in the fact that the lesson for each week is being studied by twenty-five millions of others.

"Our Sunday-school is also increased in number by the total of the Home Department membership. We count every Home Department member as an actual member of the school. Each Visitor's rank is the same as that of a teacher in the main school.

"The Home Department has kindled new interest in the Sunday-school. Persons who begin to take the lessons get interested in them, and, being invited to the main school on special occasions, come, and the result has been that not a few have drifted out of the Home Department into the main school. There is a constant drift in that direction — towards the school, not from it, as some feared at first would be the case. I believe that for the sake of the Sunday-school itself it will pay any church to start a Home Department.

"Then, too, it has been a great promoter of sociability

in the church. It is no small gain to have a band of Visitors start out every three months and make a round of calls. The Visitors gain acquaintance and influence, and the people they call on are more attached to the church, and led into closer fellowship with Christ and his people.

"We have found the Department in our church a veritable Pastor's Aid Society. The Visitors bring us a great deal of valuable information about the families where they go, tell us of cases of sickness, of persons in trouble or affliction, or of those seeking Christ.

"Another feature is the coöperation secured between the parents and the Sunday-school teachers. Parents through the Home Department become interested in the Sunday-school lessons, and studying them themselves also teach them to their children, and are interested in them and their studies, while before they paid no attention, but turned the children over entirely to the Sunday-school teacher.

"The Home Department method we find practical alike for promoting Bible study among all kinds of people; the rich and the poor, and all classes. It is an individual matter between each Visitor and the person who joins a class. By having a care to the choice of Visitors we have found all classes of our people and many outside of the church, ready to take up the regular, systematic work of studying the International Lessons.

"The day is gone by when the Home Department must be apologized for, or prejudice against it be disarmed. By its fruits it is known. So good have been its fruits that only good is known of it. So many and

multiplied are the good fruits that it is now widely known. I am happy to add the endorsement of a successful experience with it of over four years, and am sincere in saying that I think the time not distant when no Sunday-school will be considered fully equipped for its work unless it has also a Home Department connected with it."

Rev. E. N. Packard, D.D., of Syracuse, also writes as follows: — "There is no limit to the amount of good which can be done by the Home Department. I have several shut-ins who greatly enjoy their share in the work of general Bible study. The Visitor keeps them in touch with the whole work of the church, and they delight to hand in their contributions and reports. The aged and those at a distance can, in this way, keep in touch with the life of the school. Another class is helped in this way — the servants in families. Their services are required at home at the hour when most schools meet, and in the Home Class they kept up their interest. The commercial travelers also come in for the benefit, as they can study the lessons and report by mail. We have had members of our church send in reports while journeying.

"The presentation of this work offers a good door to general missionary work throughout the community. It gives a good errand to the visitor. It certainly brings into the main school some of those who begin outside. We have seen that here.

"Possibly the best evidence of my own faith in the work is in the fact that I am going to undertake a thorough canvass of my congregation, with aid from others, and offer this work to every family and individual

not now in the school. I expect to increase our numbers largely by this means."

Rev. Willard B. Thorp, pastor of the First Congregational Church, Binghamton, N. Y., bears this witness: — "I regard it as one of the most valuable parts of the church work. I get more new names of people who ought to be shepherded by our church, from the ladies in charge of the Home Department, than from any other source. This in a city church is invaluable. It secures incidentally also a large amount of Christian invitations to the homes of the people, on the pretext of carrying to them the Quarterly."

V.

METHODS OF THE HOME DEPARTMENT.

I. **International and National.** — The International Home Department Association was tentatively organized at Chautauqua in the summer of 1892. Two years afterwards at the same place it was formally adopted as a part of the International Sunday-school Association by vote of its Executive Committee, and the tentative organization was made permanent. The object of the International Home Department Association is to promote the formation of Home Departments all over the world. The roster of officers will be found upon an earlier page. It prepares and publishes leaflets, pamphlets, normal-class lessons on the Home Department, addresses and circulars concerning the work. It may appoint State and District Secretaries who shall see that the work is presented in all the denominational and interdenominational conventions and conferences within their limits, that it is prosecuted throughout their field, and shall furnish information to all inquirers. This book is published at the instance of that organization. For normal-class leaflets and information the president should be addressed at Room 30, Congregational House, Boston. He will especially welcome any interesting experiences and the relation of successful new methods.

Through the sympathy and coöperation of the International Sunday-school Executive Committee, the Home

Department is being discussed and thoroughly made known at the various state and district interdenominational Sunday-school gatherings. It appears as a topic upon almost every program. Thus it is receiving wide advertisement and powerful endorsement throughout this country and Canada. Abroad it is being pushed as vigorously as circumstances will permit; in some cases quite rapidly through such organizations as the Sunday-school Union of London.

II. **State.** — Wherever State Sunday-school organizations have energetically taken up the work of propagating the Home Department, its growth has been greatly stimulated, to the advantage both of the Sunday-schools and of the State Associations. If the State Secretary believes in it and has time to attend to it, the Home Department can safely be entrusted to him; if he is skeptical or is too much occupied, then a special secretary had better be chosen. In New York State, where the Home Department has been most widely adopted, the State Association has been greatly aided by the Woman's Aid Board, which has an efficient General Secretary and several District Secretaries. Under the working of that organization it is estimated that about ten thousand members are added to the Home Department each year. The following, as sketched by Dr. Duncan, is the method of procedure in introducing it: —

“In one of our districts a Woman's Board Secretary has been employed during the whole year. Her plan is to spend about a month in each county, giving from one to three days to each town and village according to size and needs. As far as possible plans are made and notices given of her coming at least one or two weeks

in advance and notice made of a union service or conference of workers of all denominations. She usually finds some one waiting for her, ready to extend hospitalities. She prefers to visit with the workers rather than live in a hotel. Her first efforts are to secure an active woman to act as secretary of the Woman's Work in the town, who becomes responsible for the further extent of the work and receives the yearly reports. The second day she holds a conference in the afternoon or evening, and gives notice in all the churches that all who are interested in the Sunday-school work are invited to be present and take part in the discussions. She finds it wise to first call upon the pastor and superintendent of the different churches and Sunday-schools; confer with them about the work, enlist their sympathies, and obtain suggestions from them as to the best workers to call upon, spending the remainder of the time in talking with them personally about the opportunities offered by this plan. Nearly always she is accompanied by some of the lady workers, who aid her in finding the people. In aiding her they are helping to interest themselves in Home Class work and fitting themselves for real field work. In this way the District Secretary learns the local needs of all the churches.

"At the conference in an informal address of fifteen minutes she presents the needs of the Home Class work, its extent, and gives some illustrations and results, drawn from her own personal experience, as well as the experience of others, explaining to the people the opportunity of service offered, and the small requirements, and indicating that all who will, can have some part in it. They are invited to ask questions on any point on which they

desire information and a free parliament is held in which several speak, thus bringing the matter more fully before them and developing different points.

“The workers in each village are recommended to make a systematic visitation of the entire place; the workers from different denominations going two by two, thus plainly showing that it is a union work. In this canvass the desired statistics are obtained, and all who can not or will not attend any Sunday-school are invited to join the Home Department of the denomination of their choice. All-denominational preferences are placed in one list and the names reported to the workers, who are expected to get these people either into the Sunday-school or some Home Class.

“The Sunday-schools should each have a superintendent of the Home Department who will give the necessary time and attention to the work. This superintendent should enlist as many others as the extent of the work demands, giving to each one a small permanent district, of from twenty to twenty-five families, whom they are to visit at least quarterly and deliver lesson helps, collect reports, offerings, etc. Where the different Sunday-schools are well represented at the first meeting, they should at once, if possible, choose their superintendents and commence the work.

“The Woman’s Board Secretary carries with her Home Class addresses, leaflets, membership reports, cards and canvass books, for the use of pastors, superintendents, and those who desire them, that they may have an intelligent idea of the plan, before coming together in a conference.”

III. **County.** — During the sessions of the County

Sunday-school Convention a Home Department Secretary should be appointed, with reference to introducing this agency into every Sunday-school within its territory. Such a person should be selected to carry it out as will be of himself a guaranty of success. Some one who has had experience with the Home Department, or who has strong faith in it, must consider it to be his mission to inaugurate this county work.

IV. **The Town.** — 1. **The Secretary.** If there is a Township Sunday-school organization, it will be sufficient to appoint a Home Department Secretary, who shall act under the direction of the Executive Committee. The County Sunday-school Association should address itself to securing such a secretary in each township, thus providing for a canvass in every portion of its field. If there is no township Sunday-school organization, then one should be formed, or the churches can all be invited to join in a Home Department canvass, under the direction of a secretary, to be chosen by them at their first union meeting. The essential thing is the selection of a pushing, enthusiastic, and persistent secretary. The success of the canvass will largely depend upon that officer. We go once more to New York and to the Woman's Aid Board for a clear presentation of the duties of such a secretary, who, of course, as sketched by that organization, is a woman, but who may be a man! Her or his duties are stated to be: —

First. — To bring the methods and benefits of Home Department work before the various Sunday-schools of the township, and, if possible, secure the adoption of the plan and the election of a superintendent of the work in each.

Second. — With the executive committee of the Town

Sunday-school Association to arrange for a yearly canvass of the entire township, appointing and instructing Visitors from the various Sunday-schools, assigning them to definite districts, and providing them with the Visitor's outfits prepared by the State Association, that they may visit every family, preserving certain statistics as indicated in the canvass book, inviting all non-attendants to attend the Sunday-school of their choice, and all who decline this invitation to join the Home Department of that school.

Third. — When the canvass is completed to receive the canvass books containing the Visitor's records and the membership cards with the names of those who are willing to become members of the Home Department affixed; to tabulate these records and give to each pastor a list of all families who express a preference for his church, to each superintendent a list of new scholars promised to attend his school, and to the superintendent of the Home Department of each school a list of persons who are willing to join its Home Department.

Fourth. — To conduct at the end of each quarter a conference which should be attended by all who take part in the canvass or in Home Department work in the Sunday-schools of the town, the object of this meeting being to receive reports from the visitors and superintendents of departments, to see that all persons who are induced to join the Home Department are properly visited and cared for by the school for which they signify choice, and by mutual counsel and discussion to aid in the improvement and development of the work.

Fifth. — To report plans made and results accomplished at each regular convention of the Town Sunday-school Association, and annually or more frequently, when requested, to the secretary of woman's work of the County Sunday-school Association.

2. The canvass. When the town canvass is made,

whether by the Town Association or by a single church or school, a systematic visitation of the whole field is recommended. This canvass, under the Town Association, should be made by Visitors appointed by the churches of the different denominations in the town at a meeting called for that purpose. The pastor and superintendent of each church should come prepared to present the names of Visitors from their school. These Visitors should go two by two, calling upon every family, obtaining the desired statistics, and inviting all non-attendants to come to the church and Sunday-school of their choice, and, in case any can not or will not do the latter, then to join the Home Department connected with that school. When the visitation is completed, the denominational preference of each family should be reported to the church of its choice, and to each superintendent should be given a list of new members promised for his Sunday-school or pledged to join his Home Department. This should be done even when a single school only is engaged in the canvass. From the results each school must organize its own Home Department.

V. The Sunday-school. — Even if a Sunday-school begins with others in the canvass of its parish, it must in the end take care of its own field. The united work may be continued for its value in conference and for fellowship, but each school must rely upon itself for the care of those belonging to it. The following hints may be found serviceable : —

1. The canvass. The advisability of having a map has already been suggested. Almost every county has a published township map which can be copied by tracing. If none can be obtained, then make one as nearly

accurate as possible, correcting its mistakes from time to time until a perfect working map has been obtained. Then a working sketch of her district should be given to each visitor that she may clearly understand the bounds of her territory, and thus omit visiting no portion of it, or, by mistake, going over into the territory of another.

In one case recently reported — that of a large mission school — each teacher was pledged to visit the families represented in his class, carrying with him the Home Department requisites and lesson Quarterlies. The district covered by the school was gone over quite easily in this way in a few weeks after starting, and quite a large Home Department was organized. The visiting was good for the teachers, inasmuch as it brought them into the homes of their scholars and made them acquainted with their parents and their surroundings. As a temporary expedient this was not a bad one, but it is plain that the canvass omitted calling at every house, and thus there was no concerted effort toward the evangelization of the whole parish. Again, the Home Class members need more especial attention than can be given to them by teachers whose energies and thoughts are already taken up by classes of their own. Teachers should have too much to do to assume the duties of Visitors, and Visitors certainly will be too much employed to be able to do more than to care for their Home Classes.

2. **The records.** Each Visitor should have a Home Class book in which she should make record of each fact connected with her class and her visitation which is of sufficient importance to note. She should not rely upon her memory, but put down each item which should

be called to the attention of the pastor, or of the superintendent, or of the Home Department superintendent, or of any teacher in the Sunday-school, as well as those matters which concern Home Class study and offerings. In time her book should present a history of what has been done by her in her little parish.

3. **The library.** A great deal of use can be made of the library. It can be made the effective means for circulating good reading in some families where only trashy literature is known. By a little care and attention the Visitors can make the library very valuable to the Home Class members. They can keep track of the latest and the most interesting books ; can study the circumstances of each member, and so be able to recommend something peculiarly appropriate. The shut-ins especially will appreciate good books. The Visitors, therefore, should carry the library list, and suggest especially choice or appropriate books, and see that the members get them, and that they are returned when read. In some Home Departments a "Messenger Service" has been formed from the school or the Young People's Society of Christian Endeavor, of boys who take pleasure in delivering and returning the books. They are properly commissioned by a certificate and wear a neat little badge. The Sunday-school library, through the Home Department, may go outside upon a mission of comfort, instruction, and evangelization.

One church in Connecticut has made an appropriation of fifty dollars to furnish good religious papers for circulation among the members of the Home Department, and the Visitors say that much good is being accomplished by them. In another case a large box with a slit

in the top has been placed in the vestibule, in which the members of the church and congregation as they go into church are invited to place their religious papers which they have read and are willing to pass on. These are taken out by the Home Department Visitors and distributed in those families where good reading is not otherwise provided. This is an economical and efficient way of multiplying the influence of those papers. Good reading will inevitably correct the taste for that which is pernicious.

4. **Classes.** Many schools have a special class in the main school to which the visiting Home Class students are invited. It is understood that this is their class, in order that they may feel the more at home in it. Other superintendents prefer to distribute them in different classes, corresponding to their age and attainments. In the Methodist Episcopal Sunday-school of Bethel, Conn., the superintendent of the Home Department, who is a lady, teaches a class made up of her Visitors. The Visitors find it very profitable to study the lesson with the needs of the Home Department in mind, and this weekly coming together affords them an opportunity to talk over their work and get new wisdom and inspiration for it.

5. **Socials.** To stimulate the class spirit and to win the members more effectually Home Class socials are held by some Visitors either at their own homes or at the homes of some of their members. At these, besides such pleasant recreations as will suggest themselves, quarterly or monthly reviews or conversations about the lessons are a feature. Class picnics and little trips to memorable or delightful places are also planned.

Then there may be Home Department socials, in which all the Home Classes shall join, and at which there shall be competitive examinations, addresses by the pastor and others, songs, recitations, and refreshments.

6. Recognition days. In some churches once each quarter there is a Home Department Recognition Day, when all the members of that department are especially invited to be present at a service held in the church, and where the principal seats in the body of the house are assigned to the Home Class members. Other pastors content themselves with having only one or two such days during the year, preaching at the time sermons appropriate to the occasion.

7. Membership roll. With all that is being done in the Home Department, some superintendents print quarterly and annually a list of the names of those belonging to the Home Department with their addresses and send it not only to each member of the department, but also to each member of the church and congregation. It prepares the way for its further introduction.

This chapter may well close with an account of the Home Department as it is carried on in Northfield, in Mr. Moody's home church. It will be seen that it speaks of some methods and combinations which have not been referred to, and which will be likely to suggest others. The fact is, that it is not necessary to follow out all the methods which have been presented, and it may be wise in some cases to substitute new ones. The thing to do in each case is to make the best use of the means at hand.

The Home Department work of the Northfield Sunday-

school is organized in ten classes under the care of a superintendent, who has as associates nine class Visitors. It numbers about 170. It extends over a region eight miles long by six broad. It assists and is assisted by some auxiliaries which in any similar field might probably be usefully employed and even enlarged.

The members are not only encouraged to draw books from the library of the home school, but in the remoter classes a small special library is put in circulation. These libraries are so made up that after a time they can be interchanged. Each is in charge of a librarian belonging in the district in which the library circulates. The books are brought to the notice of the people, and, passing from family to family, are sure to be read by many persons who would not be attracted to books by the list of a catalogue, and who would not think of reading them unless brought under their eyes.

Associated with the young peoples' societies somewhat, but more particularly with the Ladies' Missionary Society, are several missionary reading circles, which are also in some respects auxiliary to the Home Department. Several of these include mostly members of the Home Classes. The missionary libraries are mainly distinct from the libraries above mentioned, which are not limited to missionary books, although including some of that character. Each reading circle has a leader who keeps an eye on the circulation of the books. The circles vary in numbers from half a dozen to twenty-five, and each has a library corresponding to its membership, so that every member, or nearly so, can have a book at the same time. Books can be retained from two weeks to a month, according to the size. When the book is

read it is passed to the next name on the list, the names of all the readers being pasted on the cover or written in the book. The last reader on the list passes it to the leader of the circle. When all the books in a circle have passed all the readers, they can be exchanged with those belonging to some other circle. The circles enroll about eighty persons, and the bond of membership is the agreement on the part of each to read at least four of the books in a year. But it is found that usually each member reads all the books which come to hand.

The Ladies' Missionary Society, when it has a meeting of some special interest or on occasion of its anniversary, has found the Home Department a field open to its influence. Every lady member of the Home Department has been invited to the anniversary, and many have responded and have been brought thereby into closer touch with the whole work of the church. The missionary reading circles have done much to prepare these scattered families to respond to such an invitation from the Missionary Society.

When the last quarter came around the pastor brought the superintendent of the Home Department, the president of the Ladies' Missionary Society, and the secretary of the reading circles into conference. The secretary of the reading circles took from the superintendent of the Home Department a list of all the names on the roll, regarding them as a field which the circles should cheerfully cultivate, and planning to make the definite effort to have every family enlisted in the Home Department enrolled also among the missionary readers. The leader of each work agreed to try to enlarge her lists outside the present members, and to notify each the other of

any accessions, so that they might be sought by the other organization also. And each agreed to communicate all names to the president of the Missionary Society, so that they might be remembered when any invitation should be extended from that society.

A further auxiliary to the work of the Department is found in a circle of King's Daughters and a chapter of the Brotherhood of Andrew and Philip. These two groups each engage to do respectively for young men and young women some definite Christian service every week. A part of their endeavor is to enlist members in the Home Department. The leaders of these two groups of young people are expected to have in hand a list of all the young men and young women in town who should be sought out by them, and to see that each member of the circle has some work allotted, if they do not find it themselves. In some instances a member will be asked to get some into the Home Department and to have an interest in them when they may have become enrolled.

One forenoon the pastor visited a district with the leader of the circle of King's Daughters and introduced her to a number of young women for whom the circle might have a care. A list of eighteen persons was brought back, to whom the leader had been introduced and for whom she could plan work according to their circumstances. Some of them might be added to the circle. Several could be enrolled in the Home Department. The same work will be done in other districts of the town.

It is to be hoped that by all these interlacing and mutually supplementary agencies all souls within the scope and responsibility of the church may be cared for and won to Christ.

VI.

HOME DEPARTMENT REQUISITES.

THE requisites for the Home Department are few and inexpensive. That fact is one which commends it. No great outlay is needed to start and to carry it on. It is difficult to see how the same amount of effective evangelistic effort in any other form could be made so cheaply. Of course the devices may be multiplied, and so the cost increased, but, as planned, the expense is but slight, the main outgo being in the lesson helps, and they, in most cases, are paid for by the Home Class members.

The following forms have been lately devised by the writer to fit the present needs of the work as it has been developed, as shown in the preceding pages. These forms have been adopted by the International Home Department Association, and stand for the conception which its originator and the Executive Committee now have of the best methods of prosecuting the work. In so far as they radically differ from those hitherto in use, or suggest new ideas, doubtless they will be followed by the different denominational publishing houses and State Sunday-school associations, if not *verbatim et literatim*, yet in a general way. So far, the publishing houses making use of the Home Department have copied only those forms which hardly could be changed without detriment. Each one has preferred, and wisely, to get up its own explanatory circular and some of the other

appliances. In all probability this method will still be pursued, and those wishing Home Department requisites are respectfully referred to their own denominational publishing house. The forms here given are copyrighted by the Congregational Sunday-School and Publishing Society, for the reasons already given. If any religious body desires to make use of them, application should be made for the privilege.

In attempting to start a Home Department, the first thing necessary is a circular which clearly explains its purpose and plan, that it may be distributed among those who are to adopt it and carry it on. The more intelligent the apprehension of what it is designed to accomplish the greater will be the momentum with which all will move in it. The following is the circular prepared : —

FORM A.

HOME DEPARTMENT OF THE SUNDAY-SCHOOL.

***What
it is.***

THE Home Department is that department of the Sunday-school in which is enrolled those persons who for various reasons do not attend the sessions of the Sunday-school, but who are willing to study the lessons at home at least a half hour each week.

While there are some whose reasons for not joining in the study of the Bible in the Sunday-school are trivial, there are many who would like to do so, but are shut out from its privileges by force of circumstances. There are, for instance, the aged, the infirm, invalids, those who have the care of young children or of the sick, those who live at too great a distance from the church, isolated families and communities where there is neither preaching service nor Sunday-school. Again, there are those whose business takes them away from home most of the time, so that they cannot regularly go to any Sunday-school, such as commercial travelers, railroad conductors, brakemen and other railway employés, postal

route clerks, druggist clerks, night watchmen, civil engineers on duty, boatmen, etc. Still further, there are those whose stay in a place is merely temporary, whose local attachments are weak, such as students in colleges and academies, clerks in stores and offices, boarders, etc. Such, if they cannot be induced to attend the Sabbath-school itself, may perhaps be induced to join the Home Department.

How it is organized.

In starting a Home Department the first thing to do is to canvass the field. To that end the territory is districted, and each district is assigned to a Visitor whose duty it is to visit every family, not known to be already connected with some church or Sunday-school, and solicit every individual either to join the main school or the Home Department. Incidentally the Visitor also cordially invites each non-attendant to the services of the church. By this canvass should be ascertained: 1. Who do not attend church or Sunday-school. 2. Who will attend both or either. 3. Who will join the Home Department. A Visitor should not be asked to look after more than fifteen to twenty-five families. The corps of Visitors act under the direction of the Home Department superintendent, to whom they should make their reports.

Its relationship to the school.

The Home Department is simply a department of the Sunday-school, as close in its connection as the Senior, Intermediate, or Primary Departments. Its superintendent should be chosen in the same way as are the heads of the other departments, and should act under the direction of the superintendent of the Sunday-school and the executive committee. Its Visitors should be ranked along with the teachers in the other departments. Its members should be counted in with the rest of the school, and their study of the lesson should be regarded as the equivalent of personal attendance upon the school. Being upon a par with the other scholars, the members of the Home Department should be entitled to the use of the library and to participation in all the Sunday-school socials, picnics, entertainments, lectures, etc. The Department makes quarterly and annual reports to the main school, and similar reports of the whole school should be made to its members.

***Its
classes.***

The Home Department, like any other department, is made up of classes. These classes are known as Home Classes. Home Classes take on several forms.

They may be : —

1. **Individual Classes.** In these the members study independently of each other. They may live in the same neighborhood or be widely scattered. In these it is possible to unite in study those who are traveling with those who stay at home, those who remove to distant places with those who remain in the Home School, those who are sick and infirm with those who are well and strong. Classes of this order may be of indefinite number, according to the ability of the visitor to take care of and see to its wants.

2. **Family Classes.** It will now and then happen that a family is unable to attend the church or Sunday-school by reason of distance, want of suitable clothing, sickness, or other reason, who will be glad to pursue the study of the Sunday-school lesson together. Such a Home Class should be in every home, whether its members are in the Sunday-school or not.

3. **Neighborhood Classes.** In some localities some will prefer to meet in the home of one of their number for the purpose of studying and talking over the lesson together, under the leadership of one whom they may select. Thousands of such Neighborhood Classes are in operation in country neighborhoods which are too remote from church and school to permit of attendance upon them.

4. **Correspondence Classes.** The name suggests their character. With the consent of the Home Department superintendent, any one desiring to start such a class may do so and be its conductor. Correspondence may be opened up with lumber and mining camps, isolated individuals, families and communities. Lesson helps, report-collection envelopes, etc., of course can be sent by mail, and the reports and offerings be returned in the same way.

A Home Class frequently is constituted of two or more of these forms. Thus it may be partly individual, and partly family, and partly neighborhood, etc. That is regarded as a Home Class which is under the care of a Visitor.

***Its corps of
Visitors.***

To carry on the Home Department there are needed as many Visitors as there are districts to be canvassed and looked after. Usually ladies

are selected to act, inasmuch as generally they can command the requisite time and have more tact. Many church members who have no gift for teaching in the Sunday-school can do this work well. In some cases the Young People's Societies of Christian Endeavor have furnished a band of zealous young people for this purpose. It is the duty of the Visitors, first, to canvass the whole field, and then, after the Home Classes have been organized from that canvass, to visit the Home Class members regularly, at the end of each quarter, to carry new lesson helps, report-collection envelopes, etc., and to receive the reports and the offerings for the quarter. They should go as much oftener as occasion may require. They should report to the pastor the coming in of new families, cases of sickness, affliction, poverty, and distress of any kind, the desire on the part of any for religious conversation. Thus they are a Pastor's Aid Society. The Visitors hold quarterly conferences under the Home Department superintendent.

Its pledge of membership.

A simple pledge that one will study the Sunday-school lesson a half hour each week constitutes that person a member of the Home Department. The pledge may be written or oral only. Upon its being given, the Visitor enrolls the name in her Home Class and supplies the new member with a lesson Quarterly, report-collection envelope, or envelope and report card. Whether the necessary requisites shall be furnished by the school free of expense, or whether they shall be charged for, must be left mainly to the good judgment of the Visitor. Sometimes a certificate of membership is given. This identifies the holder's right to tickets to socials, entertainments, etc. If one is unprepared upon the first visit to make the pledge, the leaflet entitled "The Home Department Plan" (Form B) should be left, with a Quarterly, that it may be further considered.

What may be done for it.

It will help to give the Department an *esprit de corps*, if occasionally there should be a Home Department social for the purpose of making the members mutually acquainted. The pastor, superintendent, teachers, and Visitors should be present at this social, together with such other Christian workers in the church as it may be advisable to invite, with a view to bringing the members into more cordial relations with the church and school. There should

be a Home Department Day in the Sunday-school, now and then, on which all the members of the Home Classes shall be invited to be present. Review Sunday would be an appropriate day for this. They should be remembered also upon such special occasions as Easter, Children's Day, Christmas, etc. Some pastors annually or oftener preach a sermon to the Home Department. Such a sermon advertises the Home Department, and so prepares the way for its extension, as well as benefits its present members.

The benefits of the Home Department.

The Home Department is no longer an experiment. Its practicability has been thoroughly demonstrated. It has been adopted by all of the leading denominations and is being pushed vigorously by them. It has been endorsed by the International and World's Sunday-school Conventions and by many State and Provincial associations. Its benefits may be thus summarized: —

1. It increases attendance upon the main school. In almost every instance the Home Department becomes a feeder to the main school.

2. It furnishes an effective method for evangelizing the field covered by a church. A corps of visitors regularly canvassing its territory is a great reinforcement to the church.

3. It comforts and helps invalids. Said one who had been "shut in" for ten years: "It seems good to feel that I belong with Christians and am doing something in common with them."

4. It recovers backsliders. The effect of home study of the Bible is to bring them back again into the church.

5. It develops family religion. The members of a family cannot study the Bible together without being brought face to face with those questions which relate to their soul's salvation.

6. It increases church attendance. Interest in Bible study is always followed by an interest in the services of the church.

7. It develops Christian workers. Nothing is better adapted to make Christians effective laborers for Christ than to appoint them as visitors in the Home Department. The churches need this agency for its splendid discipline. It furnishes something specific for the members of a church to do, which is within their power, and which will be productive of great results.

Wherever it has been thoroughly tried, the Home Department

has been found to be a great evangelistic agency. It is calculated to reach those individuals and families who are without the gospel in a gospel land, *and for whom the church is responsible*. The plan is simple, inexpensive, and effective. By all means adopt it.

Home Department Requisites.

Each denomination prepares its own requisites, and they may be obtained by addressing the Sunday-school Secretary in each case. In cases where neither the school nor the Home Department members are able to provide that which is needed, application for aid in purchasing the material may be made by the Sunday-schools to the Sunday-school Secretary of the denomination to which they belong. The Home Department material is classified as follows:—

I. THE OUTFIT.

THE HOME DEPARTMENT OF THE SUNDAY-SCHOOL (Form A — as above), per hundred, \$1.00.

THE HOME DEPARTMENT PLAN (Form B), per hundred, 50 cents.

PLEDGE CARD (Form C), per hundred, 50 cents.

REPORT-COLLECTION ENVELOPE (Form E), per hundred, 40 cents. Or REPORT CARD (Form D), per hundred, 50 cents.

MEMBERSHIP CERTIFICATE (Form F), per hundred, 50 cents.

HOME DEPARTMENT MESSENGER'S CERTIFICATE (Form G), per hundred, 50 cents.

VISITOR'S HOME CLASS BOOK (Form H), per dozen, 50 cents.

VISITOR'S QUARTERLY REPORT BLANK (Form I), per hundred, \$1.00.

HOME DEPARTMENT SUPERINTENDENT'S RECORD BOOK (Form K).

II. THE LESSON HELPS. Each school should order its own denominational lesson helps, supplying the Home Class members according to their grades, as in the main school. Some will be advanced enough to require the helps usually given to teachers.

The above-named supplies, if not obtainable from one's own publishing house, can be ordered of the Congregational Sunday-School and Publishing Society, either at Boston or Chicago.

NOTE. — If planning for a Home Department of about fifty, with five Visitors, the first order should be for a Home Department Superintendent's Record Book, 5 Visitor's Books; 50 The Home Department of the Sunday-school (Form A), for distribution to workers; 100 Home Department Plan (Form B), for distribution in the canvass; 50 Report-Collection Envelopes (Form E), or a like number of Report Cards (Form D), and separate envelopes; 50 Pledge Cards (Form C); and other blanks as may be decided upon. The lesson helps can be ordered after it is ascertained what kind and number are needed.

In many cases the visitor will find that the person solicited is not ready to give assent. Most people, in fact, prefer to think a matter over before making any pledge concerning it. In the majority of instances it will be better to suggest that the subject can be further considered, and then leave with the individual an explanatory leaflet, a Quarterly, and the report card. In some cases this will be absolutely necessary, as when a wife would like to induce a husband to join her in making the promise, etc. The leaflet to be left under such circumstances reads as follows : —

FORM B.

THE HOME DEPARTMENT PLAN.

***What
it is.***

The Home Department is that department of the Sunday-school in which is enrolled those who are not regular attendants upon the Sunday-school itself. Any one can become a member of it by simply agreeing to spend a half hour each week in studying the current Sunday-school lesson. We trust that you will permit your name to be enrolled in this department. Of course you are absolved from keeping it by reason of sickness or other unavoidable cause, but you will see how little time is required to keep the promise. Further, the promise is for no definite period, and can be withdrawn at any time by simply giving notice to the Visitor or to the Home Department superintendent. It is hoped, however, that your interest in the department will be such that you will not wish to sever your connection with it, or, if so, that it will be only to join the main school.

The advantages offered.

By becoming a member of the Home Department you come into connection with our Sunday-school. We cordially welcome you as one with us. We assure you of our fellowship and of our wish to be of service to you. You will have the advantage of the excellent lesson helps taken by the school, and can study with us in your own home the lessons which we take up in the school. You are entitled to the free use of our library, of which we hope that you will avail yourself. You will be invited to all our Sunday-school socials, picnics, entertainments, etc. You are urged to come into the main school as often as you can find it convenient, and when there, will be placed in a class or can remain as a visitor at your choice.

The study.

Consider the fact that the International Sunday-school Lessons present a course of study of which you can thus avail yourself. They are arranged upon a plan, and to study the Bible with a plan is far better than private, desultory reading or study. Millions of people are engaged in following out the scheme pursued by them. You have seen the result in the increase of interest in the Word of God. Examine the Quarterly carefully, noting its map, its treatment of the lessons and all of its aids, and see how much help you can get from it in studying the lessons. It is a full and inexpensive commentary. Will you not avail yourself of it and of the wide fellowship of study into which it will bring you?

The offering.

Should you become a member of the Home Department, an envelope will be left with you in which you can place such offerings as you choose to make for the objects to which the school contributes. This offering is in no sense obligatory, and you can make it as much or little as you like. It is left with you that you may share in all the privileges of the school.

The reports.

You will keep your own record of the study of the lesson each Sunday upon the envelope or the report card, as indicated. At the end of the quarter, the visitor will call for the report and furnish you a new blank, together with the lesson helps for the next quarter. From all the reports thus gathered up, the Home Department will make up its quarterly report to the main school, and this report will be transmitted to

you, or the visitor will inform you of the progress of the Home Department and of the main school.

We trust that this plan, so simple and presenting such advantages will so commend itself to you that you will unhesitatingly permit your name to be enrolled as a member of our Home Department.

Faithfully yours,

HOME DEPARTMENT SUPERINTENDENT.

The pledge card, known as the membership card, may be used or not according to the judgment of the Visitor. There are people who will refuse to join at all if they are required to pledge themselves in writing to do anything. The moment that they are asked to sign a card, the undertaking assumes such magnitude and solemnity that they will not enter into it. On the other hand, there are a large number who will unhesitatingly sign, and who will feel themselves more bound than if they had given only an oral pledge. The mission of the Visitor is accomplished when a binding promise is secured, whether it be written or oral. Experience has shown that it is not best to do away with the pledge card altogether. The form adopted, good for four signatures, is the following:—

MEMBERSHIP CARD.

FORM C.

"Search the Scriptures: for in them ye think ye have eternal life."

I agree to join the HOME DEPARTMENT of the _____ Sunday-school, and to spend at least half an hour each Sunday, or during the week, in the study of the lesson for that day, unless prevented by sickness or other good cause. I will continue my membership until I notify the Superintendent of withdrawal.

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"Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly."

When the pledge has been secured, the visitor should deliver to the new Home Class member, with the Quarterly, the report-collection envelope, designed, as will be seen, both to contain the offerings and to serve as a report card. The face of the envelope thus appears:—

"Search the scriptures." — John 5:39.

Having pledged yourself to study the regular Sunday-school lesson at least a hour each week in connection with our school, you are entitled to membership in the Home Department, and are entitled to all the privileges of the school.

SUPERINTENDENT, HOME DEPARTMENT.

Form E.

"The opening of thy words giveth light." — Ps. 119:130.

HOME DEPARTMENT. Home Class No.

..... Sunday-school,

Name,

Residence,

Report for Quarter to 189

LESSON NO.	I	II	III	IV	V	VI	VII	VIII	IX	X	XI	XII	XIII	XIV	TOTAL.
LESSON STUDY AND ATTENDANCE.															
OFFERING															

In the blank space for it, mark your study of the lesson in the above diagram thus /, and your attendance on the main school with an X. Record your offerings week by week, and place them in the envelope, which will be called for at the close of the quarter, and another left in its place.

Copyright, 1894, by Congregational Sunday-School and Publishing Society.

The Report-collection Envelope will serve admirably for individuals, but where there are several in the same family, a report card is better, with a separate envelope into which all can put their contributions:—

HOME CLASS REPORT CARD. Form D.

In the blank space for the day, record your study of the lesson by an inclined mark, thus /, or your attendance on the main school by an X.

Home Department of *Sunday School.*

Class No.	MONTH OF					MONTH OF					MONTH OF					Totals.
	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	
NAMES OF MEMBERS.																
Missionary Offerings																

Unless called for, this Card, when filled, should be returned to Street, when another Card will be sent you.

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In some Home Departments it has been deemed advisable to issue a membership certificate to each one joining the Home Department. Some appear really to prize this documentary proof of their connection with the Sunday-school, but it has, besides, its practical value in identifying the members of the Home Department as rightfully entitled to tickets at socials, lectures, concerts, picnics, etc. A good form for such a certificate is here given:—

... **Membership Certificate** ...

Form F.

Sunday-school.

Having agreed to study the Sunday-school lesson at least a half-hour each week,

This Certifies that _____ is enrolled

a member of our

 **Home Department** 

And is entitled to all the privileges of our Sunday-school.

Home Department Superintendent.

As has been noted, a messenger service has been established in connection with some Home Departments to relieve the Visitor of the necessity of delivering library books and other heavy matter. In this service both boys and girls have been enlisted. A neat card certificate has been given to them that they might have it to show both to the librarian and to the members of the Home Classes in collecting the books. The certificate, which of course must be taken up whenever there is any misuse of it, is thus worded:—

"They are the messengers of the churches."

Form G.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Sunday-school.

This Certifies *that* _____ *has been appointed*

Home Department Messenger.

Home Department Superintendent

"The King's business requires haste."

The Visitor's book should designate the number of her Home Class, have a space in it for the description of her territory, and contain instructions and suggestions. The first part of the book should contain a "Record of Visitation," in which is put down the date of each visit, the names of those visited, with their street and number, a minute of facts for the pastor, another column for the superintendent, and still another for other pastors, superintendents and teachers. The next portion of the book should be devoted to the transcription of the quarterly reports of the Home Class members, as gathered from the report-collection envelopes or Home Class report cards. The last part of the book should be given to the quarterly reports, showing the number of the class at the beginning of the quarter, the number added, the number transferred to main school, or lost by death, discontinuance, removal, or by dropping out.

The blank for the Visitor's Quarterly Report, good for twenty names, is as follows : —

date of discontinuance, with its cause. A third portion should be given to the quarterly reports of the Home Classes, and a fourth to the quarterly reports of the Home Department to the school. Such a book is issued under Form K.

The prices of these various requisites have been given at the conclusion of the first one mentioned (Form A) on page 118. A treasurer's book is so simple an affair that it has not been deemed best to publish one. All the necessary account keeping, as a rule, should be done by the treasurer of the school.

VII.

DIFFICULTIES OF THE HOME DEPARTMENT.

BEFORE attempting the work the fact should be recognized that the Home Department has its difficulties. It cannot be started as easily as a loose stone on a mountain side, which needs only a slight push of the foot in order to go bounding down the slope. After it is started it is not self-perpetuating and automatic in its operations, but needs persistent and careful attention. No great results in any undertaking are to be expected without due effort. That they be not soon turned out of the way, those who engage in the work of establishing a Home Department should understand that it involves labor, self-sacrifice, discouragements, disappointments. They should not enter upon the task without resolving to continue in spite of them. The determination to succeed in defiance of all difficulties is a guaranty of success. Taking up the work in an experimental way will surely result in failure if too many discouragements are met with at the outset.

It is well before beginning to have some conception of the obstacles to be overcome. Those obstacles are not always the same in different places. In one locality it may be easy to inaugurate it, and in another it may be an up-hill undertaking. Inasmuch as one place is not the duplicate of any other, it is quite possible that one may have to encounter peculiar impediments which

others have not had to remove. Still human nature in various places is so much the same that certain hindrances may be looked for. If the full list be not realized, there will be so much to be thankful for; if it be exceeded, there will be need for just so much more faith and effort. The common difficulties may be classified as follows : —

I. In starting. — It usually is harder to get anything started than it is to keep it going after it has been successfully inaugurated. From such a beginning it gains a momentum which will carry it on through many subsequent depressing experiences. But it must prove itself to be of value before it will win sufficient loyalty in times of discouragement. Therefore the necessity of beginning with resolution and strength. In starting there are difficulties with respect to : —

1. Adoption. The great trouble is to get it thoroughly and enthusiastically adopted. If the school moves strongly in the matter, there is every reason to hope for success. If it takes it up doubtfully and half-heartedly, whether anything is accomplished will depend upon the fortunate results of its first efforts. The things which militate against its adoption are : —

(1) *Disinclination for new work.* There is always a feeling against entering upon new work. The Sunday-school itself at the beginning had to struggle against it; the Christian Endeavor Society had to meet it; the Young Men's Christian Association had to overcome it. In these days, especially, with the multiplication of societies within the church and the Sunday-school, there is a good deal of reluctance to undertake any new organization; and there is considerable justification for it.

The objection is likely to be raised that already there is more machinery than the church can run. The missionary societies for old and young, the temperance bands, the brigades, the guilds, the clubs — what opportunity is there for anything more? Where are the workers to be obtained for additional work? If the Home Department will not be a positive help in the work of the church, then it should not be adopted; if it be a peculiarly effective means, then it should be undertaken no matter what else the church may be doing. Machinery that will help should be made to help; the useless machinery should be dispensed with. In the case of each new proposition which is brought before the church the question should be, Is this work which we ought to do? If it is, then let the adoption be hearty. There is less danger of doing too much work than of doing too little. An over-worked church is a rare sight.

But the disinclination will be more pronounced in those churches which have few societies than in those that have many. Those who are doing but little hate to pledge themselves to do more. In some churches two objections always bar the way to attempting anything out of the usual. The first is, "We never tried that;" and the second is, "We once tried that and failed." There are too many who are satisfied with simply coming to hear the minister once or twice on Sundays, and attending the midweek prayer-meeting. The world will never be won for Christ in that way. Many a church has run out altogether because it did not have energy enough to recruit from the world. The Home Department is to help the church to add to its ranks from the parish in which it is situated.

(2) *Incredulity respecting the work proposed.* The plan of the Home Department is so simple that it is no wonder that to many it seems incapable of accomplishing all that is represented. "I-don't-believe-it-can-do-so-much" has killed many a proposed undertaking. The Saviour himself was unable to do many mighty works in Nazareth because of the unbelief of the people there. They could have sent to Capernaum and found out whether Jesus was the mighty miracle worker or not that he was said to be, but they did nothing of the kind, but simply said, "Is not this the carpenter's son?" If any of this unbelief is met with, let a committee be appointed to examine into the Home Department and report. Do not let the undertaking be strangled through ignorant unbelief when knowledge is so easily gained.

(3) *The difficulty of securing a good superintendent.* In some cases that is a serious obstacle. Better delay a little than choose some one just to fill the place. The one who is to take charge of the Home Department should be a person of some executive ability and who is willing to devote to it considerable time. Such a one may not be found offhand. When found he (or she) may not be ready at first to take the position. Let the matter be thoroughly considered. Let the pastor and the superintendent of the Sunday-school talk it over with the one selected. In nine cases out of ten the position will finally be taken. But if a refusal be given, why try another! Some one can be secured by due effort — perhaps the very one most adapted for the work but apparently the least likely to enter upon it.

(4) *The difficulty of securing good helpers.* That hindrance is one of the first to occur to those wishing to

establish a Home Department. The effective workers are already deeply engaged. They are at work in the Sunday-school, in the Christian Endeavor Society, etc. In most instances they should not be asked to take on new work. It is a commendatory feature of the Home Department that it seeks to develop new workers. Look among the members of the church for those who are not actively engaged. Do not be discouraged if a full list of workers cannot be obtained at once. Let the Home Department superintendent begin with two or three Visitors, nay with one — or even with none. All the Visitors required will be found in time, if one is only persistent. It is a good plan to take a friend around on the tour of visitation without disclosing the fact that she is wanted to act as Visitor. One or two rounds will show to her how easy and how delightful is the task. She will then be ready to take it up without urging. Be patient; some things have to grow; be satisfied if even this grows but slowly.

Many will object to entering upon the duties of a Visitor because they have had no training in Christian work. Unquestionably they would be better Visitors if they had been so trained, but it does not follow that they have no qualifications on account of this lack, or that they should not begin. This may be the Lord's call to service, and that they have no right to disregard. With each new round of visits they will become better acquainted with their duties and better able to discharge them. Probably many will think that they should carry around a limp-covered Bible, and be able to fit an appropriate text to every circumstance. Let this idea be gotten rid of as quickly as possible. The Visitor should

not go into any home with the air of a spiritual mentor. Lay entirely aside any missionary manner, for people do not like to feel that they are regarded from the missionary standpoint. Go into other homes as you would like any one to come into your own. Make each call a friendly one, using good sense as to making advances, not talking in stilted pious phrases, but in good neighborly fashion. Let a Visitor be sincere, hearty, natural, and she will be welcome. If she be observant and tactful, it will be only a short time before she will become a trained Christian worker.

Suppose that after the proposition has been considered, the school should reject it; what then? The Home Department plan even then need not be given up. The one who has been urging it, and who believes in it, should establish a Home Class. Make a success of it, adopting all the expedients to develop an interest in its members elsewhere suggested. Quietly invite some of the church workers to a Home Class social, or get now one and now another to go with you on your rounds. Suggest to this one and to that that they repeat your experiment. In just this way Home Departments have been established, the school at last being glad to adopt that which at first was thought to be a chimerical undertaking.

2. **Canvassing.** A Home Department is not started by a vote merely; a membership has to be secured for it; and here come in a second class of difficulties:—

(1) *Disinclination to study the Scriptures.* That is at the bottom of many a refusal to join the Home Department. There is an aversion to any kind of study with some, and this in the case of the Bible is very pro-

nounced. Miss Van Valkenburgh, of Plattsburg, N. Y., has enumerated some of the excuses for not joining the Home Department which she received from business men. Their insincerity is manifest. One man said that he could not join because he had to take care of the baby while his wife attended the Sunday-school, and he had no time to study. Another would not because his wife went to the Sunday-school, and that was religion enough for the family. One declared that he did n't know whether there was any other world, and was perfectly willing to run the risk. Another was doing two pious things already—he never signed notes as security, and never joined any secret societies; he did not feel that he could do any more. One man was in too much trouble financially. Many “had no time”; others were “too tired”; some were afraid that if they made the promise they would n't keep it. One was n't a heathen; he read the Bible when he wanted to. Another was trying faithfully to keep the temperance pledge; he could not possibly undertake anything more. Translated, these puerile excuses in each case meant “I do not want to study the Bible.” Visitors will hear just such evasions in almost every community. If the Visitor accepts them as final, her Home Class will be relatively small. Miss Van Valkenburgh did not accept them at all, but on the first call did not press the matter of joining. She simply explained the plan and advantages of the Home Department, left the Quarterly and other matter—and called again. In most of the cases she succeeded in obtaining the Home Class pledge. Many Visitors make the mistake of trying to accomplish too much upon the first visit. They are ready to give up if they do not get an

assent then. The first visit should be usually only preparatory — a visit of information.

(2) *Hostility to the church.* This obstacle is comparatively rare, but still it is liable to be encountered. There is so much talk against the church by orators who assume to speak for the laboring classes, that it would be strange if some were not infected by it. They have become venomized with the idea that the church is only for the rich. Occasionally it will be found that some are cherishing fancied grievances. They went to church, and no attention was paid to them; the pastor has never called upon them; none of the church people have ever manifested any interest in them. Both patience and tact are required in dealing with such cases. See to it that the pastor is informed of their complaint; get some of the church people to call, etc. Meantime the Visitor herself should visit them sufficiently often to be looked upon as a friend; and when that happens the rest is comparatively easy.

(3) *Inability to study.* More people than one would suppose know nothing about study. It seems an easy thing to one who has had the requisite schooling to sit down and master the lesson in a Quarterly. To many, however, it is a prodigious undertaking. They do not know how to go about it. They will refuse to pledge themselves to do it unless the method of study is made very simple to them. Hence the importance of the Visitors being thoroughly acquainted with the lesson helps, so that she can show the plan upon which they are prepared and indicate the work which the Home Class member should do. Of course here comes in the necessity for tact; for to point that out to some would

be an affront, inasmuch as they are perfectly capable of discovering all that is needed, while in no case must there be an imputation of incapability. Where suggestions are given it should be with the inference of saving time, or of taking up those features which are of most importance. Some are ready frankly to admit their lack, but most people are sensitive and would rather conceal it. They should be saved any humiliation.

(4) *Unwillingness to make a pledge.* Not a few shrink from binding themselves to anything which looks like a permanent obligation. Some will positively refuse to sign a printed pledge. It should be borne in mind by the Visitor that the manner of getting a thing done is not of so much importance as getting it done. If the study can be secured without a pledge, it is not necessary to insist upon the pledge. There are but few who will object to making a promise if it does not commit them for too long a time, but if there are any who can be led to do the work by not imposing any specific written obligation upon them, it is better, of course, to get them to do the work without the pledge. The majority of persons will work better for having made the promise, but it is n't wise to lose any because they are unwilling to make a formal agreement to study the lessons continuously. "You will let me know beforehand when you want to stop, won't you, so that the Quarterly can be discontinued?" is a promise which none will hesitate to make, and yet in effect it is the same as made by all the rest. The Visitor should not be bound to stereotyped ways of doing her work. The thing of importance is to get the people to studying the Bible — the method is of comparatively little consequence.

II. **In Continuing.** — All the difficulties are by no means overcome when the Home Department is successfully inaugurated. No self-going, perpetual motion machine has yet been discovered. It takes more steam to set a machine going than to keep it in motion after it is started, but it will not continue to run without fresh impulse. The way to make a Home Department continuously successful is to keep putting fresh effort into it. The difficulties in carrying it on after it is inaugurated have reference to :—

1. **The workers.** From various causes the corps of workers will lose some of its numbers. There will be :—

(1) *The unadapted.* At the first it cannot always be told whether one will succeed as a Visitor or not. Inasmuch as the regular rounds of visitation are far apart, it cannot immediately be determined whether one will do well or not. Frequently it happens that one who does not show much adaptation for the work upon the first two or three rounds proves in the end to be admirably qualified for it. So the Home Department superintendent should not be too hasty in deciding against a Visitor, but should carefully watch her work, going with her when it is possible, that she may give her the benefit of her example and counsel. But when it is fully evident that the Visitor is unfitted for her work, the best way is to let her go as speedily as possible. Better do without a Visitor than have a blunderer or one who has no heart in her work.

(2) *The discouraged.* A Visitor may be unnecessarily discouraged. She may think that she is not succeeding because she has not enrolled a large number in her district. Try to show her that success is not to be

estimated wholly by numbers. Let her be faithful over the few, and the Lord will reward her by giving her oversight over more. Too many are impatient to have a large class without delay. A small class will grow if the Visitor is faithful to it, and unremitting and judicious in her canvassing. The superintendent should try to encourage her. Help her to see the true importance of what she is doing. Give her a little aid; go with her; suggest new expedients; pray with and comfort her. A good worker may be saved to the Home Department. A prayer and conference meeting of the Visitors is a good antidote to discouragement.

(3) *The tired.* When one is tired the best remedy is rest. Don't lose a good Visitor because she is tired, but see that she has a respite. If she is poor, see that she is sent off somewhere where she can have a good refreshing vacation. Consult with the pastor about her, and let the matter be quietly done so as not to call public attention to her as an object of charity. When she returns she will enter into the work the more heartily for the good which has been shown to her. Only in a very few cases will this need to be done, but in them the help ought not to fail. As to others, let them understand that they are released only for a little while. Utilize their absence by "breaking in" new workers, and so enlarging the corps that more territory may be occupied. A new Visitor will succeed better after having visited the members of a Home Class already established.

2. **The students.** It cannot be expected that a Home Class will keep full after it is started. Various causes will operate to deplete it. There will be:—

(1) *Discontinuance.* Not all who begin will con-

tinue. In spite of all the efforts of the Visitor there will be instances where the study of the lessons will be dropped. Though so little is exacted by the pledge, even that little there are many who are not willing to render. Some will begin enthusiastically enough, but will soon tire of the experiment. They will be offset by others who will begin with reluctance, but who will become more and more interested. The good judgment of the Visitor must guide her as to urging those to go on who wish to fall out of the line. It is neither wise to give them up too readily nor to labor with them too much to persevere. If compelled to let them go, let it be with the understanding that at some future time they may be asked to join again. Something may occur to make them place a higher value on Bible study. Visit them once in a while in order to keep the connection open.

(2) *Joining the school.* Many a good Home Class has lost almost if not quite all its membership this way. The desire to be where the lessons are discussed has taken strong hold of those who for a while have been studying them alone. If the Visitor looks solely at her class record, this is discouraging; if she considers the object of the Home Department, she will rejoice — and set to work to get up another class. Her class should be but as a vestibule of the Sunday-school — the less time its members stay in it the better. Her effort should be directed towards keeping up the supply. She should consider her labors eminently successful if they result in continually adding to the membership of the school.

(3) *Moving away.* In many localities, especially in the larger cities, families are transient in their stay.

They remain so long as profitable employment lasts, and then go elsewhere in search of new opportunities. In some places, therefore, the Home Department is likely to lose as many through removal as from all other causes combined, unless the visitors are very watchful. They should be on such intimate terms with their Home Class members that a family would not think of going away without letting them know. Still a household might slip away during the three months' interval of visitation, owing to some sudden necessity or change of occupation, without giving any notice. In such cases the new address should be discovered, if possible, and the suggestion should be made by letter that the Home Class relationship can be continued by correspondence, or, if a Home Department is connected with the church near to which they have gone, they can be commended to its care and fellowship. The Visitor should never suffer a Home Class student to drop his membership through removal, if she can help it. If, in any case, there seems to her a likelihood of one's going away, let the suggestion incidentally be dropped that if such a thing should happen, the membership still could be kept up. Indeed, it is easy to see how the continued interest shown in one who has been obliged to go into some new locality would affect him more even than constant visitation in the old place. A kindly note on sending the Quarterly and the new report card, telling the things of interest with relation to the Home Class, the Home Department, and the school, would come to be prized beyond measure. Fidelity in looking after removals yields large returns for the Master.

(4) *Death.* There is no circle which is not liable to

be broken into by death. The dearer to each other are its members the closer will they draw together on account of this rupture. Let the Visitor see that all the other members of the Home Class are notified of the death and of the time and place of the funeral. If it be possible, they should attend and be seated together, thus emphasizing their tie toward the dead and toward each other. Before them will be a powerful illustration of the value of Bible study and of that preparation for eternity, which it is meant to instigate. It will hardly be possible for the members to come away without feeling that the Home Class is of more importance than they had yet deemed it to be. There will be quiet resolutions to make more of the opportunity for study which it gives; to enter into that Christian life to which it is an invitation; to take up the duties which that life enjoins. After that will be the Visitor's opportunity to speak a word in season. And if, seated by the casket, the Visitor knows, as in some cases she will, that to the one who occupies it she has opened the door of life, and feels sure that that one has gone from the Home Class here to the great Teacher above, how grateful she will feel that such a privilege has been given her!

The attempt has not been made to enumerate all the difficulties which may be encountered by those who wish to begin a Home Department. It would be useless to endeavor to do so, for each one probably would be able to give some special difficulty met by him which would not be included in the list. They, however, represent the principal ones; to be fortified against them is to be fortified against others. Looking them over they do not

appear to be very formidable. They surely should not prevent the attempt to do the Master's work in this portion of his vineyard. It will not be the difficulties which will thwart the establishment of a Home Department, but a lack of consecration, resolution, and persistence. What has been done in so many places can be done in any new place, with the same means and the same determination to succeed. It is yours to do the work ; it is God's to give it his blessing. Being co-laborers with God, there is no possibility of failure if we but do what is our duty. " Let us not be weary in well-doing : for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not."

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